

'We want the union and we want it now!'

St. Paul meat packers march and rally at Dakota Premium

BY CHRIS HARMON

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Chanting pro-union slogans and carrying placards saying "Our Union, Our Voice," some 200 meat packers and supporters marched half a mile from their union hall to the gate of Dakota Premium Foods as part of their drive to win union recognition.

"Sí se puede!" (Yes we can), "Queremos la unión y la queremos ya!" (We want the union and we want it now), and "Cortinas escucha—bájale a la línea!" (Cortinas Listen Up—Slow Down the Line), were among the chants from the fighting unionists. Steve Cortinas is the plant manager of this South St. Paul packinghouse. Workers are seeking to get the bosses to recognize United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789 as their union.

At the plant gate a delegation of workers and clergy tried to present a letter to the plant manager requesting that after a check of the union authorization cards he immediately recognize the union. A big majority of workers have signed union cards.

The June 12 march took place in spite of the boss keeping workers past normal quitting time by slowing down the line. Many workers, especially from the kill floor, weren't let out of the plant in time to attend either the march or the rally at the plant gate. A couple dozen workers were able to join post-rally activities at the union hall, which



June 12 march won labor and community support for demand to recognize the United Food and Commercial Workers. A big majority of workers have signed union cards.

included refreshments and a speak-out.

On June 13, the day after the march, cards were filed before the National Labor Relations Board "to get the clock ticking" said Bill Pearson, president of UFCW Local 789.

The card filing sets in motion a 45-day period in which a union representation election must take place.

The march and rally at the plant built on
Continued on Page 6

'La migra' and justice in the U.S.A.

Cuban television conducted a telephone interview with Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters on June 13. The interview was taped for the program *Mesa Redonda* (Roundtable), a panel discussion aired several times a week that focuses on Cuba's fight to demand the U.S. government return six-year-old Elián González.

These roundtable discussions often take up aspects of the history and culture of Cuba and the United States, including the long struggle for independence from U.S. imperialism. Washington's arrogant refusal to return the boy to Cuba since November 25 of last year, when he was found floating on an inner tube off the coast of Florida, is

placed in this broader perspective.

Among other questions the interviewer, Miguel Angel Masjuan, asked Waters were her views on the June 1 ruling by a federal appellate court in Atlanta. The court denied a political asylum hearing for Elián González that would have further delayed his return—a victory for his supporters. But

Cuban TV interviews SWP leader on Elián González case

the ruling dealt a blow to working people in the United States by strongly reinforcing the broad discretionary powers of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the narrow scope of permissible judicial review.

The following notes were written by Waters in preparation for the interview, based on questions Masjuan had given her a few days earlier. An abbreviated version was used for the program.

❖

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Why is it taking so long for Elián to be returned to Cuba?

Is it really so long? The struggle to get Elián back to Cuba has lasted for six months and is not over yet. To a six-year-old child, and to all of us who feel an unqualified commitment to human solidarity, it might seem like an eternity.

But Washington's calculated offensive has never been concerned with Elián. A child

Continued on Page 9

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Argentine strike hits government cutbacks

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Millions of workers in Argentina participated in a one-day general strike on June 9. The General Confederation of Labor (CGT) called the action in response to cutbacks announced by the government of Fernando de la Rúa, including 12 to 15 percent cuts in the salaries of public employees.

Union leaders reported that between 80 and 90 percent of the country's 14-million strong workforce participated in the nationwide walkout. Interior Minister Federico Storani claimed a lower figure of 60 percent.

Customs workers, school teachers, staff at hospitals, airports, and public utility companies, train workers, and garbage collectors were among those who observed the call, severely curtailing or altogether cutting services. The employees in the Government House—the presidential office—stayed away as well.

Uncollected garbage lined city streets and shopping districts. Among taxi drivers who joined the strike, five were arrested in Rosario, accused by police of using slingshots in their attempts to discourage other

Continued on Page 12

Coal miners strike firm; P&M walks out of talks

BY JACK WARD
AND JAN MILLER

TSE BONITO, New Mexico—Negotiations between the miners' union and the Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co. (P&M) broke off hours after they began June 7. These were the first talks with the company since the strike began May 15.

United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1332 represents workers at P&M's McKinley mine in Tse Bonito, New Mexico. In the talks the union presented a package of proposals to the company, but after several hours the company rejected the union's offer. According to the *Gallup Independent*, "With the break-off of negotiations, the union's revised package was dropped and Local 1332 said things now stand where they were on May 12, the last day of bargaining." No new negotiations are scheduled.

P&M refuses to budge on three key issues—work scheduling, pay, and pensions.

The company is demanding union members receive overtime only after working 40 hours in a week, instead of after 8 hours in a day as has been the case. The company is seeking a free hand to institute weekend work and a 12-hour workday. Lawrence Oliver, president of UMWA Local 1332, explained the company wants contract language that will give them "a wide open field" in setting schedules and could lead to people working "12-hour days and every Saturday without any extra pay."

The company wants to pay annual bonuses in lieu of wage increases over the next

Continued on Page 12

No imperialist intervention in Pacific islands! — pages 14, 15

Ohio Steelworkers oppose Ormet's concession demands

BY SALM KOLIS

HANNIBAL, Ohio—One of two contracts has been ratified, two of three picket shacks are down, but the struggle by Steelworkers at Ormet Primary Aluminum Corporation continues.

Members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) locals 5724 and 5760 have been involved in a months-long fight for a contract with the aluminum company. Steelworkers at Ormet's Hannibal reduction plant voted to approve a new pact 624-429 on May 11. The same day, members of Local 5760 at the rolling mill voted 443-96 to reject the proposed contract. Informational picket lines continue at the Rolling Mill, which is adjacent to the reduction plant.

With the ink barely dry on their new contract, the company announced May 18 it would be shutting down two pot lines, laying off 270 workers.

In a press release the company said it plans to sell excess electricity to industries in the Midwest during the summer months when supply is tight. "The decision to curtail production at this time ultimately came down to three economic factors," the press release stated. These are "low aluminum prices, higher than usual alumina prices, and higher electrical energy prices in the peak summer months."

"The layoffs won't stop at 270 people, that's my feeling," said Charlie Meyer, a crane operator in the Cast House. "Now I'm driving a fork truck when I'm not in the crane. Over the next few weeks the company is going to try to push job combinations. Now we are really in for a ride!"

Two-tier wage imposed

A concession in the contract, which workers in both plants objected to, was the company imposition of a two-tier wage structure for the first time. Workers hired after Feb. 1, 2000, will start at 80 percent of full pay. It will take them two years to reach full rate.

Workers in the pot room, where most new hires start, "ought to be the highest paid in the plant," said veteran Steelworker Virgil

Ash. "It is hot, heavy work. Ormet built a hospital in the plant with rehabilitation facilities to keep the carbon setters working." Ash is one of three Local 5724 members fired during the year-long contract fight, which is being fought by the union.

"Our solidarity is stronger now, we are really sticking together," said John Bellville, "but I hate to see new hires get their wages cut."

Over the life of the new four-year agreement workers will get a raise of 77 cents plus \$1.18 in cost-of-living additives. The contract also includes a \$4 increase in the pension multipliers over the course of the agreement, a \$500 signing bonus, and eliminates profit- and gain-sharing payments.

Most Local 5724 members interviewed on the day of voting were convinced that approving a contract would not end their struggle at Ormet. "We'll just have to go back and fight him [Emmett Boyle, Ormet's president and CEO] again in two years," said Jeff Willey. "That's how it's been every contract."

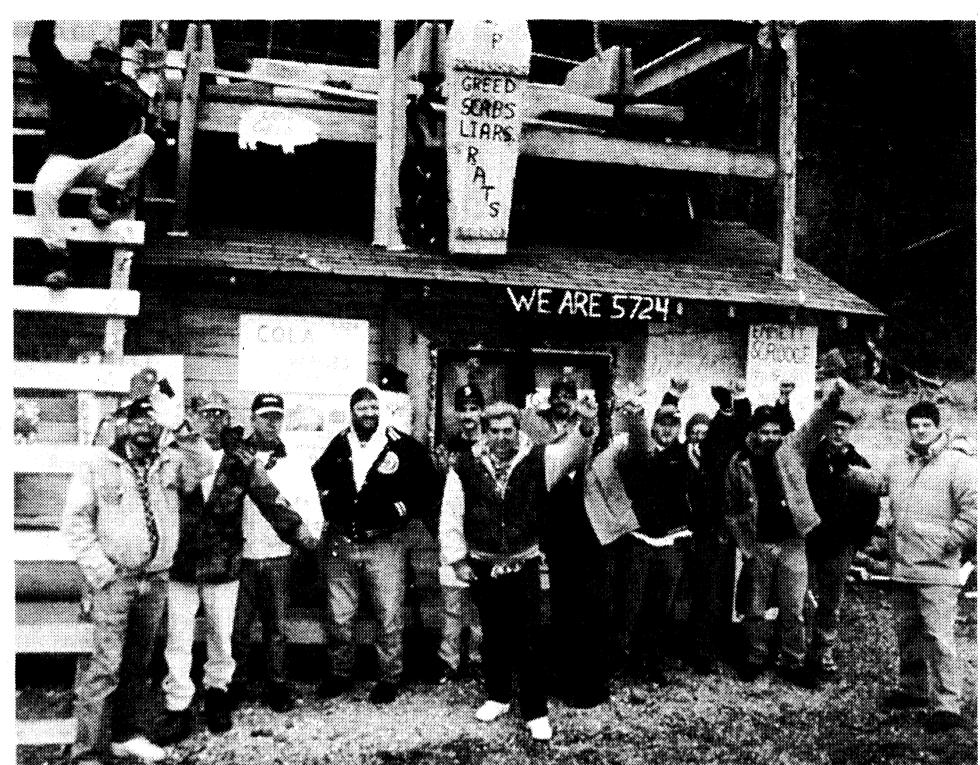
"Back in 1983, when Boyle came in cutting jobs, there was no response. Now we're are working together more," explained Ash, pointing to how the local has been strengthened through their contract fight. "Five years ago we couldn't have gotten people to stick together like this."

Local 5760 president Alan Hunt characterized Ormet's proposal for a 60-cent wage increase over three years as, "a standstill offer, if not a concessionary one."

Competition in industry

The union struggle at Ormet takes place within the context of growing consolidation in the aluminum industry as a result of sharp competition for market-share. Alcan Aluminum of Canada announced a \$4.7 billion agreement June 1 to buy Algroup of Switzerland, creating a company second in size only to Alcoa of the United States, the global market leader.

Alcoa announced it had reached a preliminary agreement to acquire all publicly held stock of Howmet International Inc. for



Militant
USWA members on informational picket line at Ormet Aluminum in Hannibal, Ohio, in December. One of two contracts has been ratified, but unionists' fight continues.

\$21 per share. The deal, worth some \$23 million, is expected to help Alcoa expand its business in the auto engines industry.

This fierce competition is fueling the tough negotiating stance of other bosses in the aluminum industry as well. Workers from five Kaiser plants went on strike in September 1998. They were locked out by the company in January 1999 after offering to return to work.

Their contract fight is over Kaiser's demands to cut retiree health insurance benefits, weaken seniority, and eliminate hundreds of jobs through contracting out. The lockout affects 2,900 workers.

In a company press release in response to the contract vote, Boyle said, "Given our difficulties with productivity, meeting customer requirements and a lack of profitability at the rolling mill, we felt that the contract proposal...was more than fair."

Steelworker Ed Carlton, who has worked in the rolling mill for 36 years, said he "didn't see anything good in the whole contract. Its a concession contract, really, and that's why we rejected it. It is harder now because of Local 5724's approving their contract, but you have to take a stand sometime."

In addition to instituting two-tier wages, the company raised the co-payment on prescriptions for nongeneric drugs to \$15 and

proposed a cap on medical benefits for retirees based on their average expenses for the previous year. The company dropped their original demand to impose mandatory 10-12 hour shifts in the mill.

"The company is really playing hardball with us since rejecting the contract," Carlton continued. "They sent a letter to us at home saying that no reading materials will be allowed in the plant unless it pertains to the job, because papers lying around create a fire hazard. Jack Horner was fired May 31 for reading a newspaper. They even took the partitions down in the men's bathroom on the hot rolling side of the mill, so we can't write on the walls."

Pro-union signs dot Route 7 along the way to the Ormet plants, honks and waves from passing cars and trucks greet the pickets, and in the bakery in neighboring Clarington you can buy a Steelworkers T-shirt with your baked goods. These are a few of the signs of the deep support the Steelworkers have won through their fight.

Local 5724 member Butch Blake said that even though they now have a contract, "We have to support Local 5760 100 percent. One day, probably next contract, we really are going to have to fight this guy."

Salm Kolis is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 1557.

THE MILITANT

Immigrants strengthen working class

From farm workers in Washington State to meat packers in Minnesota, immigrant workers across the United States are in the forefront of labor struggles. The 'Militant' explains how the bosses' efforts to use undocumented workers to divide the workforce are having unintended results. Don't miss a single issue!



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Public workers in Germany vote to strike

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Public sector workers in Germany have voted in their big majority in favor of a strike, posing a challenge to Social Democratic chancellor Gerhard Schröder.

The vote came after regional union officials, under pressure from the ranks, rejected an arbitration ruling in early June. The ruling, accepted by top union officials, held wage increases to 1.8 percent this year and 2.2 percent in 2001. The ÖTV union, organizing mainly blue-collar workers, and the DAG union, made up of white-collar workers, have some 3 million members. They had demanded a 5 percent increase this year.

More than 76 percent of the ÖTV members who voted cast a ballot in favor of a strike, as did 73 percent of the DAG members. ÖTV statutes require a 75 percent majority for strike action while DAG statutes require a 70 percent majority. The teachers union, with 80,000 members, also approved a walkout.

Workers in east demand parity

The strike vote was strongest in the eastern parts of Germany, where workers demanded wage increases that would give them parity with workers in the western part of the country. The arbitration ruling included a 3.5 percent wage increase this year for workers in the east, bringing them up to only 90 percent of the wage level of their counterparts in the west 10 years after German reunification.

Chancellor Schröder intervened in the affairs of the unions and urged the workers not to vote for a strike. He said such an action was inappropriate at a time when Germany was benefiting from an economic upswing. Other government officials had pointed to the low wage settlements in the chemical industry as a norm and argued that the workers in the public sector could not expect more.

The chemical workers union settled for wage increases of just 2.2 percent this year, a contract that was followed by one with the metal workers union in North Rhine-Westphalia that gives only a 3 percent wage hike this year and a 2.1 percent the next. These are being pointed to as a norm by the capitalists and government officials, not only for Germany but for European countries as a whole.

The small wage increases are being challenged by the metal workers in the east who demanded both a shorter workweek and that wages be raised to the level in the west.

Arizona vigilante assaults on immigrants draw protests

BY BETSY McDONALD

TUCSON, Arizona—A protest organized June 2 by the immigrant rights group Derechos Humanos (Human Rights) drew 500 people here to demand an end to attacks on undocumented workers along the U.S.-Mexico border. Rightist vigilante actions have recently increased, with the back-handed support of the U.S. Border Patrol.

Participants in the vigil came from Arizona, Texas, and several cities in California, as well as Nogales, Mexico. Many stayed the next day to participate in a strategy planning meeting.

Demilitarization of the U.S.-Mexican border and the right of workers to freely cross borders were demands raised by speakers at both the vigil and the strategy session. A call for two further actions was issued by participants in the meetings: a march and rally, tentatively called for the border at Nogales, Mexico, on July 4, and an immigration rights summit to be held at a yet unspecified border town around December 10.

As a consequence of U.S. government policy, the Border Patrol has sought to block off migration routes in populated areas. Many border crossings are now in more rural areas, such as Cochise County on the southeastern border of Arizona. This has become the central crossing point on the U.S.-Mexico border. According to local residents, thousands of people attempt the crossing in the Douglas area every night. At nearby Naco, the Border Patrol arrests and deports some 900 people every day.

Two years ago many Douglas-area ranchers began organizing vigilante actions, rounding up immigrants and holding them at gunpoint while waiting for the Border

Patrol to arrive. Roger Barnett, owner of the 22,000 acre Cross Rail Ranch east of Douglas, has become a nationally televised symbol of their violent opposition to immigration.

Barnett and 20 other local ranchers signed a proclamation in March 1999 warning that "if the government refuses to provide this security, then the only recourse is to provide it ourselves." Ron Sanders, retired chief of the Tucson sector of the Border Patrol, accompanied ultrarightist Patrick Buchanan this past January to the border at Douglas, hosted by a local right-wing group, the Cochise County Concerned Citizens.

In April and May an unsigned brochure was circulated in the area and in California inviting volunteers to "Have Fun in the Sun," patrolling for trespassers as a volunteer for a Cochise County Neighborhood Watch program. The brochure, and a May 3 televised segment of Roger Barnett and his brother, both armed, detaining nine undocumented persons for the Border Patrol while in the company of an ABC camera crew, drew a strong protest from the Mexican government. Jose Angel Pescador Asuna, head of Mexico's immigration agency, flew to the border May 5 to criticize vigilantism. Mexican newspapers called the pamphlet an invitation to "cacería," or hunting, of their countrymen.

Support for the ranchers against Mexico's accusations came immediately from both the Border Patrol and right-wing organizations. David Aguilar, chief of the Border Patrol's Tucson sector, denied the existence of vigilantes in Cochise County. Several California-based anti-immigrant groups came to a conference at nearby Sierra Vista to support the local movement.

up until the public workers rejected the arbitration ruling, been successful in keeping wages down by promising job security. As a comparison, workers in Finland and Norway through strike action won around 4 percent increases this year.

Immediately following the public workers' vote in favor of a strike, Interior Minister Otto Schily sought a meeting with Herbert Mai, head of ÖTV, in order to re-open pay negotiations.

Mai also signaled his readiness to talk, but Schily said the arbitration ruling marked the upward boundaries of what the government would offer.

Stakes are high for the rulers in Germany

in this confrontation with the unions. After appearing strong in relation to their competitors in Europe by starting to come to terms with the unions this year, a big public sector strike could dramatically change that picture. All the weakness of a "reunified" Germany could instead come to the fore.

The last strike in the public sector was in 1992, which lasted 11 days. Garbage piled in the streets and public transport and air traffic was interrupted. If attempts to restart negotiations fails, strike action could start June 14.

Carl-Erik Isacsson is a member of the metal workers union in Södertälje, Sweden.

Refugees stage breakouts in Australia

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—More than 650 refugees mostly from the Middle East, carried out mass breakouts from three detention centers in remote parts of the country June 8 and 9 in protest over interminable delays in processing their visa applications, long-term mandatory imprisonment, and the conditions they face in captivity.

Press headlines continue to brand these refugees and prospective immigrants without papers as "illegal immigrants" and "boat people."

At Woomera in South Australia about 400 people staged an overnight sit-in in the town center until authorities promised to begin releasing refugees into the community in a week.

Within 13 hours, 250 refugees staged similar breakouts from two camps in northwest Western Australia. Twelve arrests were made by West Australian police to end a road sit-down by 150 refugees at Curtin, near Derby, while arrests were also threatened at Port Hedland.

Most of the thousands of detainees, including about 1,400 at Woomera, are from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Canberra's role in Middle East

Canberra sent military and naval forces to participate in the murderous Gulf War against Iraq in 1991, and in the subsequent imperialist blockade to try to strangle Iraq's economy. The Australian rulers also supported Washington's criminal missile strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998.

Federal immigration minister Philip Ruddock announced plans to review security



Armed guards arrest immigrant after mass breakout from detention center June 9

measures at the centers and indicated that 600 will be deported as "ineligible for refugee status."

Curtin escapees said three people had attempted suicide last week because condi-

tions were so bad. Helal Faili, a Kurd, told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that detainees were abused and beaten by guards. "Even for minor things they get out their batons and hit people," he said. "They torture us because they see us as coming from ugly countries. They tell us nobody likes us in Australia and we shouldn't have come."

David Bitel, head of the Refugee Council of Australia, said, "These are the actions of desperate people who, having fled persecution in their own countries, suffer further hardship under Australia's much-criticized mandatory detention regime."

Fuel price hike detonates Nigeria strike

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In response to a 50 percent fuel price increase ordered by the government, workers in Nigeria launched a nationwide strike June 8. Schools, offices, and most banks were closed in major cities across Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, with 113 million people. The following day the oil workers union joined the walkout.

The Nigeria Labor Congress called the action to demand that the gas rate hike—from 76 cents to \$1.15 per gallon—be rescinded.

"This has been the most successful strike action called by the labor congress for quite some time," stated Lekan Aderibigbe, a Lagos school teacher. "There is hardly any one in this city who will say he was not affected by the strike in one way or the other." Lagos, a city of more than 10 million people is one of the country's most industrialized areas.

A senior government official ordered senior civil servants to return to work immediately or risk losing their jobs.

The higher fuel price is part of Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo's economic policy of deregulation and slash-

ing subsidies as demanded by the International Monetary Fund as a condition for a \$1 billion loan to the West African country. The nation is saddled with a \$31 billion foreign debt, the vast majority of which is owed to banks in the imperialist centers.

In response to the mounting labor militancy, the Nigerian government offered to cut back the 50 percent gas price rise to 25 percent. The Nigeria Labor Congress rejected that compromise.

With an acute fuel shortage paralyzing the country, President Obasanjo apologized publicly on June 12 for not consulting more widely prior to announcing the boost in gasoline prices.

The next day Nigerian union officials announced they were calling off the five-day strike after reaching a compromise agreement with the government that would boost fuel prices by 10 percent.

While Nigeria is the world's sixth-largest oil producer, working people there are overwhelmingly subjected to poverty. Gross Domestic Product is \$960 per capita, and about one-third of the population lives below the government-defined poverty line.

Socialist youth in Minnesota will host summer school center

The Young Socialists is an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS, write to Young Socialists, P.O. Box 33 Times Square Post Office, New York, NY 10108, or call (212) 695-1809, or send an e-mail to: young_socialists@hotmail.com

BY SAMANTHA KERN

Members of the Young Socialists from Newark, Detroit, and other cities will launch the socialist summer schools one week ahead of schedule in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. Jake Perasso, a leader of the Young Socialists in Detroit, is working with the Twin Cities chapter to organize political activity centered on the fight by workers at the Dakota Premium Foods plant in St. Paul to win union recognition and a contract.

Last week, the YS National Executive Committee voted to organize a third summer school center in the Twin Cities. Foot-

loose YSers on their way to the Chicago or New York centers will make a stop in the Twin Cities to join in that socialist summer school's first week of activity.

"The response the Young Socialists have gotten from workers and youth to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*'s coverage of the sit-down strike is electrifying," said Perasso, referring to a June 1 work stoppage by meat packers at Dakota Premium. "This will really charge the summer school classes." Since the sit-down strike, members of the YS have organized teams to sell both publications and also leafleted to build participation in a June 12 march to the plant organized by the workers (see front page.) Sales were organized all week at factory plant-gates, including at a picket line at the Pepsi plant where 450 workers organized by the Teamsters union are on strike, as well as school campuses.

The chapter built and attended a Militant Labor Forum featuring a panel of the work-



Militant/Jake Perasso

Dakota Premium workers fighting for a union march June 12 in St. Paul. YS members there have been spreading truth about this fight and getting out socialist perspective.

ers who organized the one-day strike. Those attending included a young meat packer from Des Moines, Iowa, and two students from the Twin Cities.

"By carrying out this activity oriented to the working class, the YS can strengthen its proletarian character and it will concretize what we're going to study," said Perasso.

The summer school activity will kick off with regional sales teams dispatched from

the Twin Cities across Minnesota. Perasso explained how the participants will incorporate the summer school syllabus into the work done on the teams. "The teams will get out the story of the meat packers' struggle for a union." There is an overlapping of struggles across the country, and the YS can help get out the political weapons fighting workers and youth need while studying lessons from the 150 year history of the working-class movement.

These teams will also give momentum to the petitioning brigades that will hit the pavement in Minnesota, Iowa, and other Midwest states in a just a few weeks to get the presidential and vice-presidential candidates for the Socialist Workers campaign on the ballot.

YS chapters on final push for fund

Young Socialists chapters and members across the country are working to meet their fund drive goals by the June 15 deadline. Events include dinners, raffles, and socials. Several chapters have passed their goals and decided to increase their contribution to the \$7,000 national target. Chapters in Tucson, Los Angeles, and Birmingham collected over 100 percent of their local goals. Chapters, members, and supporters of the YS can send their final contributions to the YS National Office. The address is: YS NO, P.O. Box 33, Times Square Post Office, New York, NY, 10108.

Louisiana derailment spills deadly chemicals

BY BILL KALMAN

MIAMI—A 113-car Union Pacific freight train carrying hazardous materials (hazmats) derailed near the rural town of Eunice, Louisiana, on May 27, forcing a quarter of the town's population to flee the ensuing inferno.

Thirty-three hazmat tank cars derailed and exploded, releasing a deadly combination of industrial chemicals. The derailed tanks also set the surrounding woods ablaze, which an ongoing drought has left vulnerable to fire.

Eunice, a southwest Louisiana town of 12,000 people, is about 77 miles west of Baton Rouge. The spectacular explosion and

fire, which at one point sent a fireball 200 feet into the air, forced some 3,500 people in a two and a half mile radius to evacuate the area, which was mainly around Eunice High School. Many fled with no change of clothing or prescription medicine.

Among the chemicals discharged into the atmosphere were toluene diisocyanate, used to tint glass, which is flammable and corrosive to the lungs, nose, and throat; 1,2 dichloropropane, used in cleaning fluids and paint thinner, which can cause chest pain and make the linings of the eyelids bleed; methyl chloride, an agricultural chemical that can cause dizziness, convulsions, and death in large enough amounts; as well as acrylic acid, molten phenol, dicyclopentadiene, pentanes, hexanes, and corrosive liquids.

Louisiana state trooper E.J. Chesne warned residents anxious about pets and homes left behind, "If you come back into these neighborhoods, you could get arrested." By June 1, five days later, all but about 200 people were allowed back in their homes.

The National Transportation Safety Board

dispatched "a team of experts" to investigate the derailment.

According to one of its spokesmen, they will "look into railroad operations to determine whether train handling or excessive speed played roles in the accident." Both the engineer and conductor on the wrecked train were tested for drugs and alcohol.

After the fires died down three tank cars had to be intentionally detonated because they were too risky to move. Hazardous chemicals may have leaked into a nearby bayou, where two hazmat tanks were thrown, and into nearby rice fields. The city's water works plant is also located less than two miles from the derailment.

Earlier in May, several hundred residents of New Iberia, also in southwest Louisiana, were forced to evacuate when a Burlington Northern-Santa Fe train carrying hazmats derailed 10 cars.

Bill Kalman is a freight conductor for CSX Railroad in Hialeah, Florida, and a member of United Transportation Union Local 1138.

YS leader joins 'Militant' staff

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

With this issue Samantha Kern has joined the *Militant* staff. Kern, 21, is organizer of the National Executive Committee of the Young Socialists. She has been a member of the YS National Committee since December 1998.

In March, the YS moved its national office from San Francisco to New York in response to new political opportunities for building the YS as a nationwide revolutionary socialist youth organization.

Kern joined the Young Socialists in November 1996 as a high school student in Spokane, Washington. After attending Mills College in Oakland, California, for a while, she took a job in a meatpacking plant in San Francisco. She served on the national fraction steering committee of socialist workers in the United Food and Commercial Workers union from October 1998 through April 1999.

During the summer of 1998 she represented the Young Socialists on a trip to North Korea as part of an international delegation organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth. She reported for the *Militant* on developments there.

This past February Kern was part of the *Militant* reporting team covering the International Book Fair in Havana, and she participated in several well-attended reportback meetings to discuss the opportunities for building the communist movement today, held in Chicago, New York, and San Francisco the following month.

In April she attended and helped cover for the *Militant* the 12th Congress of Latin American and Caribbean Students, which also took place in Havana. This gathering attracted some 6,300 students and youth from throughout the world.

Kern has also been a regular contributor to the YS column over the past year.

National syllabus for Young Socialists summer schools

This syllabus, adopted by the YS National Executive Committee, will be studied at three socialist summer school centers—New York, Chicago, and Twin Cities—and where campaign brigades are petitioning to put the Socialist Workers candidates on the ballot, and anywhere young socialists want to study collectively the history of the communist movement with members of the Socialist Workers Party.

June 18–24

Class 1 *Changing Face of U.S. Politics*
"A New Stage in Revolutionary Working-Class Politics
Sections I and II, pp. 232–265

Class 2 *Changing Face of U.S. Politics*
"A New Stage in Revolutionary Working-Class Politics
Sections III and IV, pp. 265–312

June 25–July 1

Class 3 *Changing Face of U.S. Politics*
"The Turn to the Industrial Unions," pp. 393–419

Class 4 *Changing Face of U.S. Politics*
"Capitalism's March Toward War and Depression" pp. 33–48

July 2–8

Class 5 *Changing Face of U.S. Politics*
"Leading the Party into Industry," pp. 127–166

Class 6 *U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War*
New International no. 11, Section II, "U.S. Imperialism has lost the Cold War," pp. 109–124

July 9–15

Class 7 *U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War*
New International no. 11, Section II, "U.S. Imperialism has lost the Cold War," pp. 125–150

Class 8 *U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War*
New International no. 11, Section IV, "Rebuilding the World Communist Movement," pp. 207–254

July 16–22

Class 9 *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*
pp. 21–43

Class 10 *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*
pp. 43–94

July 23

Class 11 *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*
pp. 94–127

July 27–29 Active Workers Conference

August 6–10

Class 12 & 13
In Defense of Marxism, "A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party," pp. 146–203

pp. 98–123, and "From a Scratch—To the Danger of Gangrene," pp. 173–231

August 13–19

Class 14 *State and Revolution*, chapters 1 & 2

Class 15 *State and Revolution* chapters 3 & 4

August 20–26

Class 16 *State and Revolution* chapter 5

Class 17 *Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay* pp. 33–47, Afterword to *Teamster Bureaucracy*, pp. 285–298

August 27–September 1

Week to make up classes

There will also be a special weekend including three classes:

Introductions to *Che Guevara Talks to Young People, To Speak the Truth*, and *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism*

History of American Trotskyism, Chapters 4–6, pp. 79–145

Chapters 7–8, pp. 146–203

Using the 'Militant' to tell truth about meat packers fight

BY BECKY ELLIS

MINNEAPOLIS—Supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in the Twin Cities have been busy getting out the word about the organizing drive at Dakota Premium Foods. From Friday, June 9 through Sunday, June 11 we sold 102 copies of the paper, one *Militant* subscription, and 195 copies of the special edition of *PM* featuring the meat packers fight.

We attended the Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employees Union Local 17 rally June 9. Sales were brisk to hotel workers, Overnite transportation strikers, students, and other unionists. When we regrouped we found we had sold 50 *Militants*, 10 *PM* special editions, and a *Militant* subscription.

One team left the rally early to go to the Dakota Premium plant to talk to meat packers on their lunch break. A worker from the kill line said, "We have no choice, we must organize a union," and bought both the *Militant* and the *PM* special edition. Four *Militants* and seven *PM* supplements were sold there.

After the rally teams went to a Minneapolis nonunion meatpacking plant and sold 2 *Militants* and 7 *PM* supplements. Workers there were excited to see the papers and many of them expressed that they need a union too. At stores in the Latino community in south Minneapolis we sold 10 more *Militants* and 26 *PM* special issues. By that point we needed to order more papers.

Saturday morning we picked up new bundles of papers that had just arrived and headed out to working-class communities to get out the word about the Dakota Premium Foods struggle and a rally the workers there had called for Monday afternoon.

One team went to a church that was hosting the Mexican consul, who comes to town once a year to talk with immigrant workers about getting visas and other legal documents. Workers had been in line for hours when we got there so we missed a lot, but we were able to sell 30 *PM* supplements and a few other papers.

A team went to a trailer park near the Dakota Premium plant and met workers who had worked in the plant previously, some of whom were on medical leave having been injured, all of whom wanted to tell about the horrendous working conditions in the plant. They also told us of other places in the area where meat packers live. Teams again went to the Latino food stores and a team went to the home of one of the Dakota Premium workers to visit with her and a neighbor.

That evening there was an overflow crowd at the Militant Labor Forum at the Pathfinder Bookstore in St. Paul where workers, students, and community activists heard the story of the strike and organizing drive from two of the workers involved in it. When we tallied the sales for the day we

had sold 101 *PM* supplements and 21 *Militants*.

Sunday was an opportunity for us to go to two churches that have been involved in immigrant rights activities. Announcements were made at both about the union rally the next day, and along with other activists we handed out flyers for it. Sales there totaled 15 *Militants* and 44 *PM* supplements.

❖

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Building solidarity for the Dakota Premium meat packers struggle is a key part of campaigning with the socialist publications. Their fight reflects what's coming in other packinghouses, garment shops, coal mines—union and nonunion—across the country as workers press to throw off intolerable working conditions.

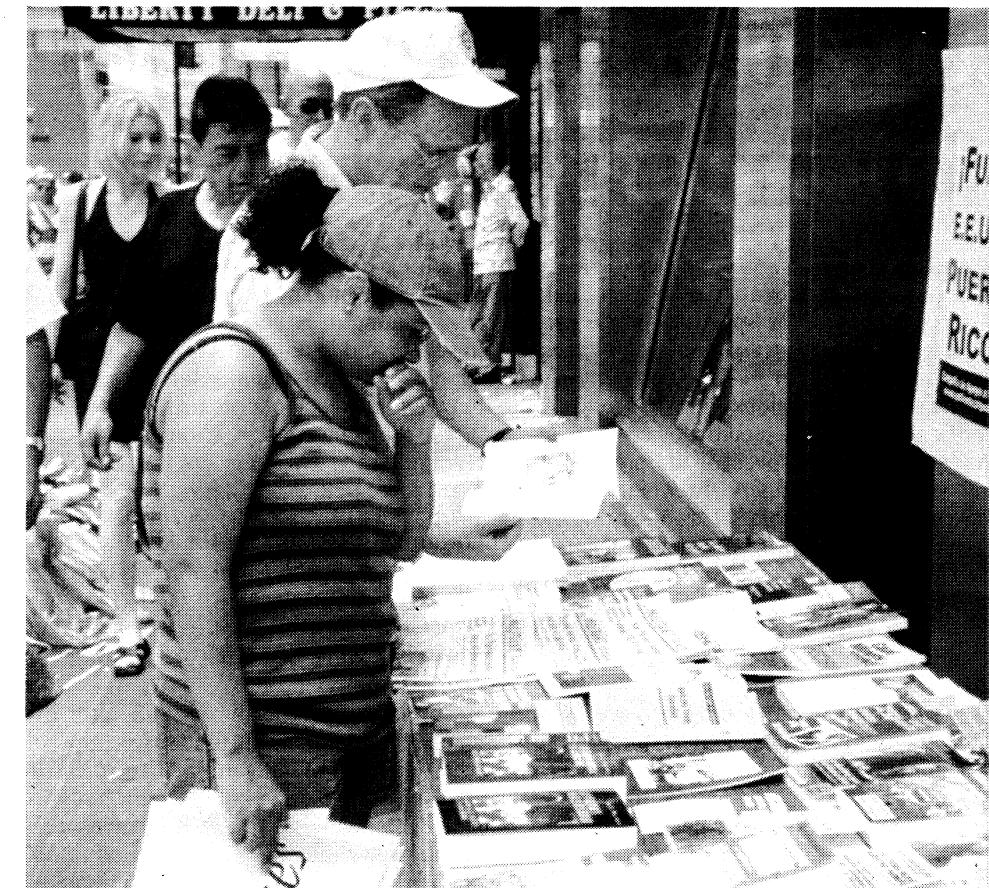
The experience in selling the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in Minnesota was similar in other areas. The unity among workers in resisting the bosses attempts to squeeze more blood money out of them and forcing concessions from the company through their fight is inspiring for other workers facing similar conditions. Edwin Fruit in Des Moines said one of his co-workers at the IBP plant in Perry, Iowa, where he works remarked, "We have to give support to these workers because when we are in a fight we will need them to support us."

"Last Saturday we set up a campaign table outside a Mexican store in Des Moines where we sold 25 *PM* supplements," said Fruit, who is a Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress. "Several of those who bought the issue were co-workers at IBP. One of them said the company has instituted a policy that makes it harder for immigrant workers to keep their benefits and seniority. He said, 'we are going to our union meeting to protest this.'"

Fruit said they sold three copies of the *Militant* to strikers on the picket line at Titan Tire, 7 *PM* supplements and two copies of the paper to workers at Iowa Pack, a non-union packing plant, and 16 *PM* supplements and two *Militants* to co-workers at IBP.

Los Angeles immigrant rights action

Sales of the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder literature went pretty well at the California immigrant rights forums sponsored by the AFL-CIO, said Mark Friedman. In Fresno the event was attended by 2,500 people, more than double what the organizers expected. "We were invited to set up a table inside," he said. "We



Militant/Laura Anderson

Opponent of U.S. Navy browses socialist literature at New York Puerto Rican Day Parade

set one up outside as well. For two hours we talked to workers, mostly Mexican, sold six *PM* subscriptions, four copies of *Nueva Internacional*, and a number of other titles, including books by Che Guevara, a leader of the Cuban revolution."

Friedman said *Militant* and *PM* supporters from Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Fresno set up four Pathfinder tables outside the immigrant rights forum at the Sports Arena in Los Angeles. One young woman who came by one of the tables, Nancy Miranda, remarked, "I've never seen this kind of literature or these ideas. They're wonderful." After spending some time reading parts of several different books, she bought a *PM* subscription and a pamphlet on a woman's right to choose abortion.

By the end of the day they had sold eight *PM* subs, and one *Militant* sub. Nearly \$500 in literature was also snapped up, including 5 copies of *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, 4 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, 4 copies of the *Communist Manifesto*, and several issues of *Nueva Internacional*. The sales team there also sold nearly 100 copies of *Perspectiva Mundial* and the *Militant*.

"Please Fedex 20 more copies of issue no. 24 to St. Louis," wrote Ellie Garcia. We are planning to sell the paper at the plant gates of a garment factory, a meat processing plant in the city, and at the Excel meatpacking plant in Columbia, Missouri." She said they plan to visit a farmers organization in the region as well.

"This week we sold six copies of the *Militant* at the Excel meatpacking plant in

Beardstown, Illinois, and 15 papers at a street table near Washington University here in St. Louis." Garcia said they did not have the *PM* special edition when they went door-to-door in a working-class neighborhood in Beardstown. One Mexican worker, who spoke little English, was so interested in the Dakota Premium meat packers that he decided to purchase the *Militant*. "We're going to give it a try," he said.

"Tonight we are meeting with two students from Washington University, one of whom is a subscriber, to discuss politics," said Garcia. "They belong to a campus group and they are interested in organizing campaign events for socialist candidates. We had sold *Militant* subscriptions to three of their members during the subscription drive." Some of those in the group are involved in a union organizing drive at a hospital in the area, she added.

"We had a very successful weekend getting out this issue of the *Militant*," wrote Ardy Blandford, a member of the United Auto Workers union in Birmingham, Alabama. "I sold four copies of the *Militant* to my co-workers at our union meeting. Co-workers were very inspired that workers at a nonunion plant were willing to risk getting fired in order to fight for their demands."

Blandford reported that two sales teams were dispatched; one to a Pittsburg and Midway mine where one team sold five papers and to Gulf States Steel where a team sold 15 current papers and eight of the previous week's issue. "We also had a team go to Natchez, Mississippi, where they met with Titan Tire strikers on the picket line." One striker renewed his *Militant* subscription.

Pepsi workers in Minnesota walk out

BY JACOB PERASSO

BURNSVILLE, Minnesota—"What is going on here?" asked the June 13 edition of St. Paul's *Pioneer Press*. An article in the paper's business section said the attempt to unionize Dakota Premium's "roughly 150 production workers comes at the same time 400 Teamsters are striking Pepsi-Cola Twin Cities bottling plant and 1,450 local hotel workers are threatening to strike nine local hotels as early as Thursday," June 15.

More than 400 members of Teamsters Local 792 walked off the job June 11 at the New York-based Pepsi Bottling Group, the nation's largest Pepsi bottler. Workers overwhelmingly rejected the company's final contract offer 364 to 14. The Burnsville plant supplies Pepsi's beverages to the seven-county Twin Cities metro area.

Workers on the picket line said Pepsi has hired at least 100 security guards from Huffmeister Security, which looks like a small military operation deployed in the area. Clerical workers who are not in the union have been threatened with firing if they don't cross the picket line and do production work.

A Teamsters local official at the picket line said that all interviews go through the head negotiator, but a number of workers described their fight.

One striking driver on the picket line said, "Spread the word, drink up all the 'Dew' you can. We figure in a couple weeks the shelves will be empty." Mountain Dew, a product bottled at the Pepsi plant, is the most popular Pepsi beverage in the Twin Cities area, according to strikers. Teamsters said if the strike continues they expect Pepsi products to be unavailable at stores by the Fourth of July weekend, a time when soft drinks are in high demand.

Local 792 also organizes more than 500 workers at Midwest Coca-Cola Bottling Co. in nearby Eagan, Minnesota. The company distributes the majority of Coke products in Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas, Wisconsin, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

According to workers on the picket line at Pepsi, Coca-Cola workers overwhelmingly voted June 11 to reject a contract offer. Teamsters at the Pepsi plant picket line said workers at Coca-Cola receive better compensation for the same work because they had fought, including by striking, over a number of contracts in the past decade. One worker noted that Coca-Cola workers have higher wages and a better pension plan.

The strikers at Pepsi are demanding a wage increase, improved pensions, and a halt to rising health care costs. Many of the drivers, salespeople, and other workers are

on the job up to 16 hours a day. The workers want a pension plan that would allow them to retire before the age of 62 without penalties. The *Star Tribune* quoted striker Jeff Christiansen, 46, saying, "I don't have 16 years left in me. If I have to retire early then what am I supposed to do."

Larry Yoswa, secretary-treasurer of Local 792, told the *Tribune* that Pepsi wants to send its fountain products in bulk to central warehouses for big accounts such as Burger King and Taco Bell, a move that would go against union drivers because they work on commission.

The local has organized roving pickets that follow every truck as it leaves the plant. They set up pickets where the scab management drivers stop to unload. Workers explained that solidarity has been good. Many people honk in support as they go by, and an Oklahoma truck driver refused to cross the picket line with much needed supplies for production.

The last time Pepsi workers struck the plant was in 1985. During that walkout, which lasted 10–12 days, and made a slight gain, only the drivers were in the Teamsters union. Since then, the local now represents production workers, loaders, delivery salespeople, and vending machine technicians who operate from the Burnsville plant.

From Pathfinder

Teamster Rebellion

TEAMSTER REBELLION
Tells the story of the 1934 strikes that built an industrial union and a fighting social movement in Minneapolis. \$16.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write Pathfinder, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014. Fax: (212) 727-0150. If ordering by mail, please include \$3 for shipping and handling.

Meat packers march for union in St. Paul

Continued from front page

a seven-hour sit-down strike workers held June 1 to protest the speed up of the production line that was resulting in an increasing number of injuries. The company has made some concessions in response to the strike. A worker selected by his co-workers now monitors the speed of the production line and tells the supervisor when to slow down. One worker said, "They are using kid gloves on us right now, but that will change."

The letter sent by union president Pearson to the company on June 12 said in part: "On Thursday, June 1st, the workers at Dakota Premium Foods took an unprecedented action by demanding safer line speeds. When they were told to return to work or leave, more than 100 workers walked out of the plant in protest. This incredibly brave action has since captured the hearts and minds of virtually everyone who has seen or heard of it.

"At the same time, workers from the plant asked UFCW Local 789 to assist them in becoming Union. We have signed a majority of the workforce on authorization cards from kill, processing and related departments. Let this letter serve as a demand for recognition. In conjunction with that, we feel a card check by a member of the clergy would expedite this matter and be in everyone's best interest." Plant security guards blocked the gate, preventing the petitions from being delivered to management.

Miguel Olvera, a worker in the plant who is one of the leaders of the union organizing drive, told the crowd at the plant gate: "I am very happy for your support today. This march is not just for those of us in the plant but for the children."

During the plant gate rally, Maria Granados, who has worked in the packaging department for two years, told the *Militant*: "The speed of the line is so fast that despite our best efforts we can't keep up." Her friend beside her nodded in agreement. This was repeated by worker after worker. Over the last six months the line speed has increased by 40 percent.

"This action is rooted in the poor treatment workers receive, such as the overwork from the speed of the line," said Miguel Gutierrez, a cut worker in his late 20s, while

marching back to the union hall from the plant. "I have many experiences in Mexico participating in protest actions such as this in school and in unions. We need continued support in the community for our struggle, but we must reach out broader. My sense is that in the plant we have strong support, including on the kill floor, but it is not organized there yet."

Organizing support on the kill floor

"Many of us who came from Mexico had fear when we came here," Gutierrez said. "But we see the role of religious people and others. We know that if we get the truth out we will win."

Supporters at the march and rally included three workers at Holiday Inn Express who were part of a determined and victorious fight to organize into a union, only to face victimization by the INS. They continued to fight even after *la migra* tried to deport them, and received broad support in their struggle. The workers recently forced the INS to back down for a while from the threats of deportation.

Some members of the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 17 also joined the meat packers rally fresh from a June 9 march of several hundred in downtown Minneapolis to demand a new contract. The hotel workers are threatening to strike nine local hotels this week. (See accompanying *Militant* article.)

Several members of the clergy participated with delegations from their congregations. Announcements about the meat packers march were made at several churches the previous Sunday and leaflets were distributed after mass. Workers also came from a tannery in South St. Paul, as did members of the International Association of Machinists from Northwest Airlines, and members from United Transportation Union Local 650. Activists from ISAIAH, a coalition of religious and community organizations in Minnesota that is active in defense of immigrant rights, a representative from U.S. senator Paul Wellstone's office, and members of other unions and community groups also attended.

Meat packers in Austin, Minnesota, sent



Workers applaud as letter is read demanding union recognition from bosses at Dakota Premium Foods. Photo is from front page of business section of *Pioneer Press*.

a letter of solidarity to Local 789 from "your brothers and sisters of Local 9 UFCW," signed by 56. "We support your struggle for dignity, better working conditions, and a union. Your example teaches us. 'Yes we can do it!'" the message read in Spanish and English.

After the march, over sandwiches and soft drinks at the union hall, worker after worker told their story and discussed the next steps to organize their union in the plant. The meeting was translated into Spanish and English. The large majority of the 175 workers at Dakota Premium are Spanish-speaking immigrants from Latin America, especially Mexico. There are also a number of U.S.-born Black, Chicano, and white workers.

"What you saw today is the tip of the iceberg," said union president Pearson, who opened the meeting. Marie Sanchez, the first worker to speak, said the bosses "treat us like animals and yell at us. If we have a union it's better for us and our family. Why are we afraid? We're brothers and sisters. They don't have the right to treat us like animals. I was hurt when I got hit by a fork truck with pallets. The supervisor didn't report it, so I did. I can't work because I'm hurt. But they think I quit. They have something else coming. I'm not quitting. I'm not going anywhere," she said to applause.

Rights of workers and immigrants

"We're going to come together in a stronger union," said Pablo Tapia, an auto body shop worker in a Teamster-organized shop, who is active with ISAIAH. "That's what the struggle is about—the rights of workers and immigrants." Tapia helped distribute leaflets for the meat packers' action at churches the Sunday before the march.

"I believe the march had an impact on the company," said organizing drive leader Miguel Olvera. "The day I don't want you to forget is June 1, when over 100 of us sat down in the plant. I never, never, want you to forget that only by staying united can we achieve what we want and truly desire. Right now I want to invite anyone from the cut or the kill floor to join us. Let's win over more co-workers to this fight."

Samuel Farley, who works on the cut floor, said the struggle needs more solidarity such as shown that day. "This is just the

beginning. Our struggle for a union comes at a good time. Other workers are stepping forward," he said, "from the Teamsters who just went on strike against Pepsi, to the hotel workers fighting for a contract, to the Holiday Inn Express workers, to miners on strike in New Mexico and Wyoming. Our power was demonstrated with last Thursday's sit-down for over seven hours. What we need now is a larger leadership team in the plant to explain to others why we need a union."

"I've worked in South St. Paul in meatpacking for 44 years," said kill floor worker Jose Estrada. "There is a big difference between working in a plant with a union and without a union. I recommend to the young people here to join the union." He was greeted with warm applause.

Enrique Flores, a younger worker on the kill floor, said workers "do two days work in one day. When I call supervisors and say the machine is broken they don't do anything. They leave all the hard work to me. The supervisors just care how many cows we're slaughtering, not if someone gets hurt. If we stick together, we can win. If we have the union, we will have something to back us up."

For the first time the struggle made the pages of the big-business press, with a large photo and article on the first page of the business section of the Saint Paul *Pioneer Press* headlined, "Workers march on meat plant—union activity bustles, from hotels to factories." There was also a small article in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* that quoted a statement from Dakota Premium Foods that said "the vast majority of the plant employees have made it clear they do not want a union."

Amy Roberts, a worker in packaging, reports that the first day on the job after the march and rally co-workers were greeting each other with "Si se puede!" during the course of the day. Others questioned why more workers didn't turn out for the rally.

A union fact sheet in English and Spanish distributed the day after the rally was welcomed by workers in the plant. It described the previous day's events and the refusal by the bosses to talk to the workers or receive the petition at the plant gate. It ended by saying: "When we are union, the company will have to listen!!!"

Chris Harmon is a union meat packer in Michigan. Jake Perasso, a Detroit-area meat packer, also contributed to this article.

Socialist supporters pitch in

In response to the labor battles erupting in Minnesota, longtime supporters of the socialist movement there are pitching in on several key fronts that have made a difference.

The photos of the June 12 march in St. Paul by meat packers fighting for a union, on the front page and elsewhere in this issue, were made possible by Michael Pennock, who loaned his digital camera to *Militant* worker-correspondents for the duration. Pennock has also made spare rooms in his house available for workers arriving from out of town to be part of building solidarity with these labor fights, and Young Socialists taking part in the socialist summer school.

Another supporter of the Socialist Workers Party contributed a dozen travel vouchers, which will be a big help for socialist workers and youth to respond quickly to these class-struggle events.



June 12 march. The UFCW has filed for union representation election within 45 days.

Hotel workers rally for contract in Minneapolis

BY ANNA HARRIS AND BECKY ELLIS

MINNEAPOLIS—"We don't get no justice, you don't get no peace," chanted 300 hotel and restaurant employees here as part of their fight for a contract.

Members and supporters of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 17 picketed in front of the Minneapolis Downtown Regal Hotel June 9, then marched to the Hilton hotel.

The contract for Local 17 expired April 30. The workers who are employed by nine major Minneapolis area hotels soundly rejected a five-year contract proposal by a 94 percent margin, a vote that also approved strike action.

Otis Reeves, a worker at the Hilton, said, "We are fighting for fair wages and health care for our families. It's a shame you work 80 hours a week. After paying for food and rent and bills, you can hardly get by. We are the backbone, the foundation of these hotels."

"We are going to win," said José Gómez, who has worked at the Hilton for 8 months.

A group of housekeepers who were working at the hotel came out to join the picket during their break.

Union members from other current struggles in the Twin Cities area attended the march and rally to show their support and to get out the word about their fights. Four strikers against Overnight Express, a trucking company in Blaine were there. Greg Cagle, one of the leaders of that strike, said their strike was seven months strong and the workers remain on the picket line. Twenty five of them have been fired and Teamster Local 120 is fighting to get their jobs back. "Everybody's got to get together," he said explaining why they were at the rally.

Workers at Dakota Premium Beef in South St. Paul, who are currently in a union organizing drive, were represented by United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) organizers from Local 789. A group of AFSCME Local 3800 members attended who have recently been through a contract fight at the university of Minnesota. "We had to be here," said Gladys McKenzie. "This

fight is important for every worker in the Twin Cities. I want to see a labor movement that's not afraid to stand up to the employers and these workers are showing the way."

Buses organized to bring workers in for the march came from throughout the Twin Cities. Members of Local 17 who work in St. Paul whose contract is up in November participated, as did the Free Mumia Coalition, ACORN, church groups, and students. Jesse Jackson and Minnesota senator Paul Wellstone spoke at the rally.

HERE represents bell stand workers, cleaners, banquet workers, cooks, bartenders, and waiters and waitresses. "We represent women, immigrants, and minorities," said Jaye Rykunyk, Local 17's principle officer. "These people are at the bottom of the heap. They know what struggle is all about."

The union is seeking pay increases of 21 to 46 percent, with the largest increases going to the lower paid workers, who have a starting pay of \$8.50 an hour. The union also wants greater employer contributions to health and retirement benefits.

Farm workers demand pay raise, legal rights

BY ERNIE MAILHOT
AND GEOFF MIRELOWITZ

PASCO, Washington—As chants of “*Si se puede*” (Yes we can) rang out, 3,000 farm workers, family members, and supporters marched June 4 through the streets of this town, demanding wage increases for cherry pickers and amnesty for undocumented workers. The march, organized by the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) with the support of the AFL-CIO, was the biggest labor rally in this area in years.

Contingents of agricultural workers came from many cities and towns around Washington and Oregon. Signs identified groups of workers from Royal City, Othello, Connell, Yakima, and Moses Lake, among others. A group of students from Central Washington University marched behind a banner of the Chicano student group Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Atzlan (MEChA). Others carried Mexican flags.

Workers marched behind banners from Teamsters Locals 556 and 760. Local 556, which organizes meat packers at Iowa Beef Processors (IBP) in Walula, Washington, went through a bitter strike last year. They chanted “*Se ve, se siente, la unión está presente!* (You can see it, you can feel it, the union is here!).

Recently workers at IBP held a press conference to denounce the company for its unsafe line speed. As a result of the speedup, some cows are being butchered while conscious instead of being completely knocked out beforehand. This degrading callousness has also led to injuries to workers who are kicked by the animals.

A number of carpenters union members from Seattle came to the march on a bus sponsored by their union. A second bus from



Militant/Lisa Ahlberg

Farm workers march June 4 in Pasco, Washington, demanding wage increase and legal residence for undocumented workers. Sign on left reads, “Cherry pickers’ wages have been the same for 20 years. Not fair!” Sign on right reads, “The undocumented are fighting for a decent life and a new amnesty law.”

Seattle was paid for by the Seattle Central Labor Council. Ten students from the University of Washington School of Social Work in Seattle also marched.

Key issues fueling the day’s activities were the wages and working conditions for the 16,000 workers who are about to begin harvesting Washington State cherries. The cherry growers’ earnings have tripled from \$60 million in 1985 to \$186 million in 1999. In the same 15-year period, workers pick-

ing cherries continue to be paid at the 1985 piece rate wage of \$3.50 to \$3.75 per 30-pound box. The UFW is demanding a raise to \$6 per 30-pound box.

The other theme of the march—amnesty for undocumented workers—got a boost earlier this year when AFL-CIO officials changed their longstanding support for sanctions against employers who hire undocumented workers—legislation that bosses have used as a club against immigrant work-

Janitors in Silicon Valley win pay hike

BY DEBORAH LIATOS
AND LARRY LANE

SAN JOSE, California—at a June 3 contract vote meeting here, janitors voted 643–116 to approve a contract with a dozen cleaning contractors. The janitors, who clean most of the commercial buildings in Silicon Valley, won a wage raise and pushed back increases in their payments for health insurance.

Workers were prepared for a strike as the contract expired at midnight on May 31. Union officials kept negotiating and reached a proposed agreement a couple of days later. The contract fight in this area followed strikes by janitors in several cities around the country. Janitors recently waged successful strikes in Los Angeles, Chicago, and San Diego. In each case they won significant labor solidarity and public support through organizing rallies and large picket lines, and won improvements in pay and benefits.

In the Bay Area too, Service Employees International Union Local 1877, with 5,500 members, had launched an active campaign to demand better wages, lower health-care payments, and a contract of shorter duration. Over the last few weeks they held picket lines and rallies in the four counties where they work—Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara and San Mateo.

Some 700 union members rallied at Todos Santos Park in Concord in a show of confidence and resolve. Banners at the rally read “Ready to Strike,” “A Bedroom for Our Kids,” and other slogans. Clad in red “Janitors for Justice” T-shirts, the throng of unionists chanted “*Si se puede*” (Yes we can) and marched in a disciplined column through two nearby worksites, a Bank of America administrative center and a Morgan-Stanley Dean-Witter stock brokerage building.

Pay and health coverage

Workers interviewed by the *Militant* outside the June 3 contract meeting stressed that the key issues were better wages and paying less for health care.

“I have worked more than 20 years in the industry and I earn a little more than \$10 an hour working in San Jose,” said Rosendo Pérez-Chica. “We’re organizing people more, and I hope we can win by this. If we don’t get our demands, we will go on strike. I am more confident about the union because of this struggle,” he added in an interview before the vote.

“I make \$8 an hour after working in San

above the \$17,000 official poverty level in Santa Clara County.

With the new contract, workers’ health insurance premiums will be rolled back to pre-March 1 rates. The employee contribution to health insurance will be reduced by 43 cents an hour by the third year of the contract. Their out-of-pocket costs had nearly doubled in April when premiums rose from about \$40 a month to \$71.

The union won a three-year contract instead of the five-year pact initially demanded by the bosses. It will have the same expiration date as the Los Angeles contract, giving workers in California more combined strength when they fight for their next agreement.

The contract vote meeting was conducted primarily in Spanish. Tom Csekey, the janitors’ chief negotiator, gave the main presentation in Spanish outlining the proposals and recommending approval.

Deborah Liatos is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union. Larry Lane is a member of the International Association of Machinists. Jim Gotesky, a member of the United Steelworkers of America, also contributed to this article.

Massachusetts nurses beat back forced overtime

BY SARAH ULLMAN
AND TED LEONARD

WORCESTER, Massachusetts—After seven weeks on the picket line members of the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) won their first contract and beat back the hospital bosses’ attempt to impose forced overtime.

“The patients will have much better care, much safer care because of the strike,” explained Janet Green at a union-sponsored victory celebration at a local night club here. Green has been a nurse for 21 years at St. Vincent’s Hospital (SVH).

The nurses voted 358–5 to ratify a three-year contract May 18. All nurses will receive a \$1.50 per hour raise the first year and a 4 percent across-the-board hike the second year.

The biggest issue in the strike was the hospital’s demand for the right to require a nurse to work an additional eight hours at the end of an eight-hour shift, whenever the hospital officials deemed it necessary. The new contract limits mandatory overtime to

no more than four hours twice every three months or eight times per year. The agreement also gives union members the right to refuse specific overtime assignments.

The pact provides nurses with a voice in decisions around staffing and nursing practice issues, calls for the phaseout of a controversial flex time policy, and provides the nurses with some input in issues related to the hospital’s move into the new Worcester Medical Center facility.

The 49-day strike was immensely popular among working people in Worcester and across the state.

On May 6, the first day of “Nurse’s Week,” the MNA organized a rally in front of the hospital. “Nurses from 23 hospitals across the state and nurses from California, Rhode Island, and Michigan participated,” said David Schildmeier, communications director of the MNA.

“No forced overtime,” “Patients not Profits,” read some of the signs at the rally. After the contract was ratified the nurses discovered that state government officials had

ers. In February the AFL-CIO executive council decided to call for amnesty—granting legal residence to all workers without papers who currently live in the country.

The harvest of fruits and vegetables is a big part of Washington State’s economy, and farm workers are an important component of the working class here. Many move from crop to crop—asparagus, cherries, apples—as the seasons change. According to the *Seattle Times*, 70 percent of the 100,000 seasonal workers in Washington’s agricultural industry are estimated to be undocumented. Many of the march participants insisted that farm workers must have the same rights as other workers.

One farm worker from Mattawa told the press she has to pay \$2,000 out of the \$10,000 she earns a year to a *coyote* to get her across the border to see her family. “Coyotes” are the smugglers who prey on Mexican workers forced into dangerous and expensive border crossings by the U.S. government’s anti-immigrant policies.

Reynaldo Cruz, a farm worker for many years at Chateau Ste. Michelle Vineyard in Sunnyside and a veteran UFW activist, said he came to the march to “support the fight for respect, benefits and decent contracts.” He explained that he had been part of the fight to unionize Chateau Ste. Michelle, where they won their first contract in 1995. “With the union we have more benefits, and I’m here for amnesty and better wages for everybody.”

‘Need to broaden out struggles’

Steven Peak, a Steelworker locked out at Kaiser Aluminum in Spokane, Washington, for the past 20 months, was excited about being at the march. “I’m blown away by the turnout,” he said. “It’s an honor to participate. The struggles of the farm workers and the Steelworkers are great. We need to broaden them out even more.” Referring to the thousands of locked-out Kaiser Steelworkers, he added. “We buy into justice for everyone and we’re here to show our solidarity and support.”

At least one marcher came from San Diego, California. Andre Thomas flew up and then drove from Seattle to join the march. A customer service representative and member of the International Association of Machinists at Alaska Airlines, Thomas has been fighting for months to win his job back after being unjustly fired.

Another group of fighters at the event was a contingent of mostly Mexican workers who have been on strike since August 1999 against Valley Manufactured Housing in Sunnyside, Washington. These unionists were facing a company-sponsored decertification election two days after the march. Rogelio Montes, a central organizer of the strike, explained that they were at the action to support the farm workers and to invite people to their picket line.

The marchers gathered for more than two hours afterward to listen to speakers and music. Cheers went up for Guadalupe Gamboa, executive director of the Washington State UFW, when he told the crowd that today’s march was just the beginning.

Another protest is being planned for August 6 in Mattawa, Washington.

been cooperating with the hospital to expedite the certification of out-of-state nurses to cross the picket line. The scab nurses were being certified in 72 hours.

A number of picket lines were organized where 50 to 100 unionists from the area would participate. Jackets, caps, T-shirts, and banners identified workers from various unions, including the United Steelworkers of America, postal workers, United Auto Workers, Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Teamsters, Service Employees International Union, and others.

More than 80 members of UNITE Local 311 in Lawrence, Massachusetts, sent a letter to the striking nurses telling them, “We send you our solidarity and you should know that you are taking an important stand for all working people.”

Sarah Ullman is a member of the United Transportation Union, Ted Leonard is a member of UNITE.

U.S. farm activists: 'Cuba respects farmers'

BY BETSEY STONE

CHICAGO—Two delegations of working farmers from the United States have visited farmers in Cuba this year as guests of the National Association of Small Farmers of Cuba.

The potential of these farmer-to-farmer exchanges for strengthening the struggles of farmers, and workers, in both countries was evident at a June 3 Militant Labor Forum here featuring participants in the delegation to the congress of the National Association of Small Farmers, held in Havana last month. The delegation from the United States was made up of working farmers active in farm struggles in the Midwest, South, and New England.

Randy Jasper, a Wisconsin dairy farmer and activist in the American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association and Family Farm Defenders, said in his presentation that he learned "two shocking things" about Cuban farmers. First, was "how well respected the farmers are" and second, "they actually make money!"

Jasper explained that Cuban farmers sell to the government about 80 percent of what they produce, and are paid a price that covers the cost of production, plus a surplus. "This is guaranteed," he said. The other 20 percent can be sold by farmers at the market.

For the approximately 10 percent of farmers who cannot cover costs with this arrangement, "it's against the law to repossess their farms," he explained. "The government works with these farmers so they can make it."

He contrasted this to the situation in Wisconsin where an average of six dairy farmers a day are forced to give up farming because they cannot cover their costs. Jasper said that in the past year the number of farmers has increased by 25,000 in Cuba. "If you want to farm, they will provide land," he said.

The delegation learned that a high percentage of the fruits and vegetables eaten in Havana are raised in city gardens, cultivated by volunteers as well as full-time workers. "There is a different outlook when a person volunteers to produce food and shares that product with others," he said. "This is a society that understands where food comes from."

The delegation visited a cooperative of 500 people where farmers worked the land together, pooling their machinery. The coop included a medical center and school. Jasper was surprised to find that quitting time was as early as 5:00 p.m.

He spoke of the difficulties these farmers face as a result of the reduction in trade from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and the U.S. economic embargo. The tractors from Belarus are old and lacking parts, he said, and Cuban farmers told them they "were never much good even when they were new." Fuel shortages have obliged many Cuban farmers to use oxen and mules to do farm work.

Challenges in dairy production

The dairy cows suffer from the hot climate and a lack of feed high enough in protein. The powdered milk supply on which Cuba depended virtually disappeared with the collapse of favorable trade relations with Eastern Europe, but still every child from one to seven years old, and pregnant women and the elderly, get a liter of milk a day. Pointing to the Chicago street outside where

the forum was being held, Jasper commented that he would be surprised if every child up and down that street got a liter a day. "The Cubans have a limited amount, but they put it where it does the most good."

Jasper was impressed with the friendliness and spontaneous responses of the people the U.S. farmers talked with in Cuba, many whom they met on the street as they traveled around. "They didn't just want to listen," he said. "They wanted to talk with you, to express their views, and ask questions. They didn't talk against the people of the United States, but they don't say good things about the U.S. government—but neither do I."

He was struck by the expressions of solidarity. When the U.S. farmers explained to a group of older Cubans how farmers were losing their land in the United States, the reaction was one of dismay. "This is something they didn't know about," he said.

He explained that before this trip he knew little about the Cuban revolution, except things he heard such as "Castro is a raving maniac" and "they have everyone locked up in jail."



Militant/Betsey Stone
Basu, farmer in Pembroke Township, Illinois, spoke at Chicago Militant Labor Forum with others who took part in U.S. farm delegation to May congress of National Association of Small Farmers of Cuba. Above, Basu on his organic vegetable farm.

Farmers lead fight against Illinois prison site

BY DAVID ADAMS

PEMBROKE TOWNSHIP, Illinois—A sign on the big red tractor at the head of a caravan of tractors and cars read, "Pembroke Farmers Coop is Pembroke's future—Not a prison." The caravaners were protesting plans by the Illinois state government to construct a prison here.

The caravan stopped at the site slated for the prison, where Louise Anthony and Johari Cole, both leaders of the Pembroke Advocates for Truth (PAT), explained why farmers and others in the area are determined to prevent the 1,800-bed women's prison from being built.

"This is a moral question. There is no justice in the prison system. Period. Especially for African-Americans," Anthony explained. She also pointed to the Basu farm, directly adjacent to the proposed prison site, and explained how the light and chemical pollution from the prison pose a threat to the organic farm. Development planned in the wake of the prison also threatens other farmers in the area.

Pembroke Township is an overwhelmingly Black rural community about 60 miles south of Chicago.

The Memorial Day protest caravan kicked off the all-day "Farm Fest 2000." The Pembroke Farmers Co-op and PAT, an activist group that has been tenaciously fighting the prison plans, hosted the Farm Fest at the farm run by Basu and his wife, Pamela Basu.

In his welcoming remarks, Basu, president of the farmers co-op, explained the efforts of local organic farmers to band together. Emphasizing his commitment to stop the prison and remain on the land, he explained, "The more serious they got about it [building the prison], the more serious we got about it. The land is our mother and our wealth. You ask us to give up our wealth,

our mother. We will not do that."

Later that week PAT sponsored a citizens forum on the prison and invited every official and land developer that has anything to do with the project, from Governor George Ryan on down, to address the meeting and answer questions. While the governor, the mayor of Hopkins Park, and Anthony Perry, a wealthy real estate developer who orchestrated the Hopkins Park application for the prison, did not attend the meeting, a half dozen officials from the Illinois Department of Corrections were on hand. About 50 people, mostly from the community, attended. A range of views on the prison were expressed from the floor.

Linda Dillon, who headed the Department of Corrections delegation, argued that the prison will bring jobs, economic development, and infrastructure improvements to the area. Another corrections official, Glenn Hodgson, announced that \$8.3 million has been earmarked for infrastructure improve-



Militant/David Adams
Pembroke Township farmer in May 29 Farm Fest 2000 tractorcade against Illinois government plans to build prison.

ments required to build the prison.

Thesley Beverly, a retired resident who was part of a panel with three farmers seated at the front of the room, exclaimed, "I have been here since 1969 and all of a sudden this money comes up in connection with the prison. It is a disgrace. You have given us no answers as to whether the prison will benefit the village. It is just going to be a prison to enslave our people in our injustice system. I would not be happy to have better roads and infrastructure if we have to sacrifice our people."

A woman from the audience added, "Why couldn't it be something the community wants? Why a prison?"

Pamela Basu asked the prison system officials if they had been informed that the planned prison was sited next to a certified organic farm. Hodgson said they had not heard about this, but the Illinois Department of Agriculture had signed off on the project.

Then Basu, husband of Pamela Basu, rose to say, "Our plight is because of the USDA," referring to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "We were denied money through discrimination and racism. I've just been to Cuba and I saw the people running things down there. Here we see secret meetings behind our backs."

Before the Illinois prison system officials got up to leave the meeting, Beverly took the floor again, saying, "Our society is corrupt. We as Black people take note: any time we get a small infraction, we go to prison." He pointedly looked at the Black members of the delegation of corrections officials and said, "We know that some Africans profited from the slave trade."

As the farmers continued to raise objections to the prison, corrections official Dillon stridently insisted, "The decision has been made. The prison is coming."

"Not yet!" shot back several voices.

Jasper heard Fidel Castro speak when he addressed the farmers' congress. "I learned more history from that speech than I did in all my years in high school," he said. "I learned about Cuban history, but also about the world, because he spoke of how Cuba fit into the world."

Castro explained that most anything of commercial value in Cuba was owned by U.S. corporations before the revolution. "That explains a lot about what happened after they kicked the U.S. companies out," Jasper commented.

Farmers making decisions

Basu, an organic vegetable farmer from Pembroke Township, Illinois, was also on the delegation. He is a leader of a farmers' coop and a member of Pembroke Advocates for Truth, a group that is fighting the proposed placement of a prison next to farmland worked by his family and other organic farmers.

Basu contrasted the high-handed methods of U.S. government officials trying to force the prison on the Pembroke farming community, operating behind the backs of the people, to the way he saw decisions being made in Cuba.

"At the congress we saw farmers sitting down together, making the rules and regulations for themselves, voting on their decisions," he said. "No one else is defining Cuba's destiny. No one else can tell that country what to do—this is part of the revolution."

Basu said he did not find the kind of expansion of prisons in Cuba that is happening in the United States. "The emphasis is on things like education, free schools, free medical care." The prison they are trying to build in Pembroke is "immoral," he said. "There will be people there who were railroaded; there will be profits coming out of human bondage."

Pointing to photos on the wall of the Militant Labor Forum that show picket lines of workers on strike, of demonstrations, and farmers' protests, he said, "Prison are being built against things like that, to contain us."

Worker and farmer alliance

Another member of the delegation, Myrna Towner, a meat packer and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, began her remarks by quoting Raúl Castro, the Cuban vice president and minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, who attended the entire farm congress in Cuba and participated in the discussion.

Raúl Castro explained that the political weight of Cuban farmers today is rooted in the history of the revolution. "The Mambi army fought with machetes for Cuban independence," he said. "Who were they? Peasants. Who led the Rebel Army 40 years ago? Peasants," the Cuban leader said. "The unity of the workers and farmers is the motor force of the revolution."

Towner said that wherever the U.S. delegation went, talking to people in the streets, and in their travels, everyone knew about the small farmers congress. It was front page news in the paper every day.

Farmers are held in respect in Cuba, Towner explained, because they, in alliance with the workers, made a revolution that won political power and they continue to take leadership in running society today. She said the congress "taught us a lot about this alliance between the workers and farmers."

She pointed out that the congress registered, in the interventions of one farmer after another, their pride in the role farmers have played in breaking the back of the economic crisis that followed the cutback of Soviet trade.

The nearly 1,000 farmers who were delegates to the congress grappled with how to continue to use their creativity and energy to raise production in the face of many seemingly unsolvable difficulties. "What has made the Cuban revolution unique today," Towner stressed, "is that it is the workers and farmers, and not a privileged layer of technicians and functionaries, who are in the drivers seat." She described the beginning of a decisive political effort that gave more weight to politics and increased working-class mobilizations in the 1980s, known as "rectification," which countered the emergence of a privileged layer of professionals

Continued on Page 12

'Elián González must go home'

SWP leader explains class issues at stake in Washington's battle against Cuba

Continued from front page

of any other nationality rescued from the sea as he was would have been repatriated to his own country in a matter of days.

What is at stake here is the battle for Cuban sovereignty. It is Washington's determination to crush the revolutionary power of the Cuban people, to punish them for the affront of establishing the first free territory of the Americas some 40 years ago. That has been the goal since 1959. So in the context of Cuba's battle for independence from U.S. imperialism, six months is really not so long.

The important question, I think, is how to explain that the Cuban people, despite the enormous arrogance and power of the U.S. rulers, are going to win this battle. Because the truth is that Elián would not be coming home at all were it not for some very significant things happening in Cuba and in the world:

- if the Cuban people, through their enormous efforts and discipline, had not emerged from the worst years of the Special Period stronger rather than weaker;
- if the revolutionary government of Cuba had not given the order in February 1996 to end the provocations carried out by Brothers to the Rescue, which had repeatedly violated Cuban air space after many warnings and with the full knowledge of U.S. government authorities;
- if the Cuban people had not sustained months and months of massive mobilizations since November of last year in their determination to win the battle for world public opinion against Washington's refusal to return Elián;
- if the resistance of working people within the United States to the conditions of exploitation and oppression they face on the land and in the factories were not slowly but steadily mounting, and sometimes spouting ahead;
- if immigrant workers did not constitute a growing percentage of the U.S. workforce and an even greater proportion of the vanguard of the resistance developing within the working class and labor movement.

If these things had not happened, or were not happening, then Washington would feel substantially less pressure to modify its arrogant refusal to respect Cuba's independence and sovereignty.

Just last week a struggle broke out in a meatpacking plant in the city of St. Paul in the Midwestern state of Minnesota. Some 170 workers, both men and women, in an unorganized factory where cattle are slaughtered and cut into huge slabs of meat for marketing, staged a sit-down strike to protest the increasingly dangerous and brutal speed of the production line, and the high rate of injuries suffered by workers as a result. Another of their demands was that they not be forced to work the line when injured. This is a plant where the workforce is overwhelmingly immigrant workers, mostly from Mexico. They are constant targets of the hated Immigration and Naturalization Service, *la migra*, as it is generally known here.

For seven hours, in a powerful display of unity and determination, the workers refused to work or to leave the plant as management demanded. They won significant concessions from the bosses and are now involved in the struggle to organize themselves into the UFCW, the meat packers union.

Many other recent examples of this kind of resistance by working people in the United States could be cited—successful strikes by janitors and cleaning personnel in Los Angeles, Chicago, and other cities. Strikes by coal miners in New Mexico and Wyoming. Demonstrations by small farmers. Twenty thousand workers in Los Angeles rallying in defense of immigrants rights. Statewide actions in defense of affirmative action in Florida. Sustained, large-scale mobilizations against brutal police murders

in city after city.

What do these events have to do with Elián's return to Cuba?

It is not only the people of Cuba who have emerged from the worst days of the Special Period more confident, more political, more united. Tremors of heightened combativity are giving the U.S. rulers pause for reflection here too. And the meaning of events such as the popular insurrection that occurred in Ecuador in January of this year are not lost on them either.

In that context, the sustained effort Cuba has organized to win the battle of world public opinion, the massive political mobilizations of the Cuban people week after week, month after month, have made the U.S. rulers decide that they have achieved their primary objective in this case and have nothing further to gain from their blatant and arrogant denial of Cuban sovereignty.

The reason Elián will soon be returning to Cuba has nothing to do with the supposed humanitarianism of Janet Reno, William Clinton, or any other U.S. government figure. It has to do with these kinds of political developments happening in Cuba, in the United States, and around the world.

If it weren't for the strength of the Cuban revolution and the intensifying class struggle inside the United States, Elián would not be coming home at all.

Why are all these legal procedures delaying justice?

Justice is of no concern to Washington. Nor is justice something working people in the United States expect from the judicial arm of the imperialist state.

The U.S. court system is theirs, not ours. It is part of their system of checks and bal-



Militant/Mark Friedman

June 12 march in Los Angeles prior to immigrant rights rally of 20,000 sponsored by AFL-CIO. Sign in foreground says, "We immigrants generate the wealth of California." U.S. rulers seek to expand powers of INS to try "to deal with their real concern—the growing resistance, confidence, and combativity of larger numbers of immigrant workers in the United States."

today is the growing evidence, partly due to advances in DNA technology, and mostly due to heightened working-class resistance, that a high percentage of prisoners on death row have been wrongly convicted, even in the bourgeoisie's terms.

Late last year, when Elián was rescued off the Florida coast, the U.S. government soon realized what an unexpected opportunity that event created to advance one of the rulers' central policy objectives.

Two bills signed into law by William Clinton in 1996—the Illegal Immigration Reform Act and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (even the names of the laws speak volumes)—conferred draconian new powers on the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to seize and deport suspected "illegal aliens" without right to judicial review or appeal, and to jail immigrants using "secret evidence." These and similar provisions are a flagrant negation of the Bill of Rights working people won as amendments to the U.S. Constitution in the aftermath of their victory in the first American Revolution—the war of independence from British colonial rule.

Workers, farmers, and all defenders of

more than half a century.

The ruling handed down June 1 by the Federal Court of Appeals in Atlanta did exactly that. Its opening paragraph states:

This case, at first sight, seems to be about little more than a child and his father. But, for this Court, the case is mainly about the separation of powers under our constitutional system of government: a statute enacted by Congress, the permissible scope of executive discretion under that statute, and the limits on judicial review of the exercise of that executive discretion.

The court refused to overturn the INS's decision that the asylum applications filed on behalf of Elián González were invalid. The court ruled that "we cannot say that the foundation of the policy—the INS determination that six-year-old children necessarily lack sufficient capacity to assert, on their own, an asylum claim—is unreasonable." It affirmed that "the INS did not abuse its discretion or act arbitrarily in applying the policy and rejecting Plaintiff's purported asylum applications." And it upheld the INS ruling that only the child's father could speak for him.

But the political heart of the decision lies elsewhere. The ruling affirmed that "the authority of the executive branch to fill gaps [where legislation adopted by Congress is silent] is especially great in the context of immigration policy." This is due to the substantial "international-relations implications" of the executive's immigration policies.

After contemptuously and slanderously asserting, "as a widely-accepted truth, that Cuba does violate human rights and fundamental freedoms and does not guarantee the rule of law to people living in Cuba," the federal appeals court affirmed:

[I]n no context is the executive branch entitled to more deference than in the context of foreign affairs. This aspect of the INS policy seems to implicate the conduct of foreign affairs more than any other. [A ruling] that, for immigration purposes, no parent living in a totalitarian state has sufficient liberty to represent and to serve the true, best interests of his own child in the United States—likely would have significant consequences for the President's conduct of our Nation's international affairs: such a rule would focus not on the qualities of the particular parent, but on the qualities of the government of the parent's country. As we understand the legal precedents, they, in effect, direct that a court of law defer especially to this international-relations aspect of the INS policy.

The precedent established in the case of Elián González strengthens the "international relations"—i.e., "national security"—foundations to exempt INS policy decisions from normal judicial review and reinforce the powers of the executive branch. This judicial rationale will be used by the U.S. rulers as they attempt to deal with their real concern—the growing resistance, confidence, and combativity of larger and larger numbers of immigrant workers in the United



SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters (second from left) talks with workers at Cuban agricultural cooperative in Holguín province, October 1992.

ances, one of the mechanisms the rising, and at that time progressive, bourgeoisie established more than 200 years ago to enable that class to resolve factional differences within its ranks and maintain class stability. It is a system that has served them well for most of that period—save for the small matter of a Civil War to settle the question of property rights in other human beings.

Working people caught in the coils of the U.S. judicial system know we are on enemy ground. We fight to delay injustice, to buy time to mobilize broad popular support that can protect us from being railroaded for "crimes" we did not commit. A degree of justice is something workers sometimes win *despite* the legal system, not because of it. The prison population in the United States has doubled since William Clinton took office and the number of yearly executions has tripled. The horrible injustice of the death penalty in the United States is anti-working-class and racist to its core. One of the great scandals emerging in the United States

democratic rights have been challenging the constitutionality of these new immigration and "antiterrorism" laws, seeking to mobilize public opinion against them and expose their utterly reactionary character.

The Elián Gonzalez case—precisely because the majority of people in the United States thought the child should be returned to his family, and thus to Cuba—provided the Clinton administration an unusually good rationale to refurbish the hated image of the INS and win a federal court ruling that would establish a legal precedent upholding these newly expanded powers of the INS to implement policies and procedures exempt from normal judicial appeal and review.

They could deal blows to working people and other opponents of *la migra*'s greatly enhanced extrajudicial administrative prerogatives. They could strengthen the powers of the executive branch of government, strengthen the imperial presidency—a course central to ruling-class objectives for

Continued on page 14

20,000 rally in L.A. for immigrant rights

BY PATRICIA GUTIÉRREZ
AND MARK FRIEDMAN

LOS ANGELES—In what became the largest immigrant rights action here in years, 20,000 working people packed in and surrounded the Sports Arena June 10 for an AFL-CIO-sponsored forum.

“¡Aqui estamos y no nos vamos!” (We are here and we’re not leaving!) was among the most popular slogans of the rally. While 15,000 people crammed into the stadium another 5,000, unable to enter, marched outside chanting *Sí se puede!* (Yes we can!) referring to their fight for amnesty, dignity, and justice for all immigrants.

The “Immigrants Rights Forum,” called by the AFL-CIO was the fourth held in California. Others had occurred in Salinas, San Jose, and Fresno, attracting 2,500 people. Smaller meeting were also held in New York, Atlanta, and Chicago to announce a change in the AFL-CIO’s previous anti-immigrant position.

The federation now calls for a new am-

nesty and reversed its support for sanctions and fines against employers hiring immigrants. Many of the remarks by union officials from the platform were cast in a framework of U.S. patriotism.

The meeting was stamped by the growing confidence and dignity—and accomplishments in fighting for union representation, better working conditions, and improved contracts—of workers in Los Angeles and across the state who have immigrated to this country.

Invisible no more

The large delegation of some 1,000 from the United Farm Workers union came in buses from across the state. Hundreds of janitors, members of the Service Employees International Union, who recently won a solid victory when they struck employers in the city, wore T-shirts saying, “Invisible no more.” Several hundred garment and hotel and restaurant workers also participated.

Nongyo Varanond, an activist in Thais for Immigrants Rights, helped organize a contingent of 350 from the Thai community, many of them garment workers. She spoke about the conditions facing these workers, including poor housing and the forced use of public bathrooms due to dilapidated apartments. “Many Thais are fearful of the INS, but the question is how can we get together and send a message to the government that we need improved living and working conditions.”

One of the testimonies during the program was by a Thai garment worker from El Monte named Rogana, who, she said, had been a virtual slave with 71 others from April 1994 until August 1995. They were not allowed to leave work, were forced to work from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. seven days a week, and were paid just \$1.65 an hour with no benefits.

Hotel worker Marge Sánchez from Palm Springs spoke about union organizing experiences in which she had been involved.

These included a four month strike, fighting firings, management review of immigration papers in an effort to take away their victory, and the decision that nobody would go back to work unless all of them did. “We have the power when we stand together” she emphasized.

Other testimonies by an apple picker from Yakima Valley in Washington State, a carpenter in Seattle, a health-care worker in Los Angeles, and a 17-year-old California farm worker were welcomed by the crowd.

Any mention of the word Mexico, or testimonies by immigrants mentioning their Mexican hometowns, received thunderous applause, as did any reference to the victorious janitors strike.

Banners from Thai, Filipino, Korean, and Salvadoran immigrant community organizations, and from churches and unions, adorned the hall. About 30 Indians, as well as delegations of Vietnamese, Brazilians, and other nationalities, and a busload from Mission Dolores in San Francisco, participated.

Central Americans march

Before the official forum, a half-dozen immigrants rights groups held a march of 1,500 to press for unconditional amnesty and an amendment to the “Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief” law

Mariella Velásquez, from Honduras United in L.A., who helped organize the contingent of 200 Hondurans leading the march, said, “We want amnesty without conditions, no matter how long you’ve been here. Hondurans are not included in the current amnesty legislation, even though Honduras was part of the U.S. war against Nicaragua and El Salvador.” She had been inspired by the recent janitors strike here and helped organize Hondurans to join the march.

A group of students from Belmont High School demonstrated, as they had for the janitors. Jessica González said, “Many of our parents are janitors, and immigrants and that’s why we supported the strike and this march.” A young woman named Christina, a former student from Roosevelt High, also agreed.

Isabel from Pico-Union, a member of the Bus Riders Union and a participant in the janitors strike support rallies, said, “We shouldn’t have to have papers. People are coming in every day, and dying trying to. Shouldn’t they be included in the amnesty?”

Here from Mexico City, from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), marching and distributing flyers appealing for support, was Liseth Beltran. “Two hundred and fifty student strikers face a return to jail (despite their recent release) for their activities in the 10-month strike beginning in April 1999 to defend an open and virtually free higher education in Mexico,” read a flyer handed out by the activists.

Handmade signs reading, “Work permits for All,” “Justice for all immigrants,” “Residency, yes. Deportation, no,” “Don’t wait for your papers at home, Unite in the struggle,” and “Stop the hunting of immigrants, no human being is illegal,” peppered the crowd.

Patricia Gutiérrez is a student at the University of California in Santa Cruz. Mark Friedman is a member of the International Association of Machinists in Los Angeles.

Marchers in NY parade: ‘U.S. out of Vieques’

BY LAURA GARZA

NEW YORK—“Vieques Sí, Marina No!” That chant—Vieques yes, Navy no—rang out block after block as the lead contingents marched up Fifth Avenue during the June 11 Puerto Rican Day Parade here.

This year the parade, an annual festival and outpouring of pride for Puerto Ricans that drew an estimated 2 million people, was marked by widespread expressions of support for the fight to end the decades-long use of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques for target practice by the U.S. Navy.

That battle has become a focal point in politics, both in that Caribbean nation and in U.S. cities with large Puerto Rican communities, since April 1999, when a U.S. warplane on training exercises dropped a bomb that killed Vieques resident David Sanes. The bombing range there was subsequently occupied by protesters until May 4 of this year, when FBI agents and U.S. marshals backed by U.S. marines evicted the protesters. Demonstrations have continued since then.

Parade organizers officially dedicated this year’s event to the people of Vieques and to Pedro Albizu Campos. The lead floats and contingents featured several blocks of marchers campaigning for the removal of the U.S. military from Vieques and the release of pro-independence political prisoners.

At the head of the parade was an “Albizu Vive” (Albizu Lives) float featuring a larger-than-life statue of Albizu Campos, the historic leader of the Puerto Rican struggle for independence from U.S. colonial rule, who was jailed for many years by the U.S. government for his anti-imperialist activities and died in 1965.

The 40-block parade route was plastered with signs, on police barricades and held aloft by people in the crowd, that read “Peace for Vieques.” Some spectators brought homemade placards. The Vieques contingents drew waves of loud applause and cheers, with only a small handful of spectators giving the thumbs-down.

One of the most popular contingents was made up of several dozen Vieques fishermen and other residents of the island. Hundreds of other political activists came from Puerto Rico to take part in the parade and



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Hundreds marched in ‘Albizu Vive’ and Vieques contingents at Puerto Rican Day Parade

other events, the most prominent being the Hostos National Congress and the Socialist Front. The Vieques Support Campaign in New York had a large contingent as well.

Pro-Libertad, a New York-based committee campaigning for the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners, had a colorful float featuring the pictures and the names of six jailed *independentistas*. They carried a banner declaring “Faltan seis” (Six are left), referring to the fact that 11 of 17 political prisoners—many of whom spent two decades in prison—won their freedom last year through an international defense campaign.

Other groups marching with banners and signs in the parade included the Socialist Workers Party, Young Socialists, Pastors for Peace, Workers World Party, and the Committee for the Return of Elián González to Cuba.

One youth, Angel Pérez, said he was marching in the Albizu Vive contingent because “people should have the right to live where they want peacefully. It’s been a long time since they [the Navy] invaded, but that doesn’t matter. It’s time to stop the bombing now.”

Maritza Rosado, a Manhattan teacher, said she was marching to demand independence for Puerto Rico. She joined the contingent from the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), which this year had a sizable presence, both from the island and chapters in New York.

Along the side of the parade, Kimberly Irizarry, 21, had come with four other family members from the Bronx. She held a sign in Spanish that said, “Our island Puerto Rico has no price.” It referred to efforts by the Clinton administration to offer millions of dollars to Vieques residents if they agree to the U.S. Navy staying on their land.

The Vieques and other political contingents at the parade were the culmination of a week of forums, panel discussions, picket lines, poetry readings, and other political events. One was a forum at the headquarters of Local 1199 of the hospital workers

union, featuring a panel of trade union officials on the situation facing the labor movement on the island. Several meetings featured PIP leader Rubén Berrios.

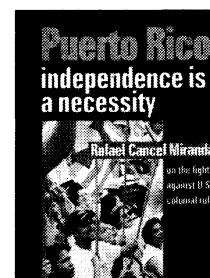
Ismael Guadalupe, a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, was featured at a number of public events, including a June 10 forum sponsored by the Vieques Support Campaign and Charas, a community center. Also speaking was Lolita Lebrón, one of the five Nationalist Party activists who spent more than two decades in U.S. prisons for their involvement in a 1954 armed protest in the U.S. Congress. She was welcomed as a heroine by many along the parade.

The previous day, several dozen people picketed outside a Bronx courthouse demanding trespassing charges be dropped against seven activists who unfurled flags and signs protesting the Navy’s presence on Vieques during a May 5 Yankees-Orioles game. A new court date was set for July 10.

damage. South Korea’s Defense Ministry will suspend live bombing exercises during the summit between south Korean president Kim Dae-jung and north Korean leader Kim Jong Il June 12–14 in Pyongyang, the capital of north Korea. They will resume bombing after the meeting. The Defense Ministry ruled out closing or moving the military base and instead will relocate 236 homes closest to the range.

Students organized similar protests recently in Seoul, demanding the withdrawal of 37,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea. Chanting “Yankee go home,” the students tried to march to the U.S. embassy but were stopped by the police. South Korean law bans demonstrations within 100 yards of foreign diplomatic missions.

Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity



Rafael Cancel Miranda

In two interviews, Cancel Miranda, one of five Puerto Rican nationalists imprisoned by Washington for more than 25 years until 1979, speaks out on the brutal reality of U.S. colonial domination. In English and Spanish. Booklet \$3

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BY SAMANTHA KERN

Demanding the closure of the Koon-Ni bombing range in south Korea, around 2,000 villagers and activists marched from Mae Hyang, a village 50 miles southwest of Seoul, to the nearby U.S. military bombing range June 6.

Protests against the U.S. military occupation of Korea have increased since early May, when a U.S. jet dropped six bombs on the Koon-Ni Range near Mae Hyang. Villagers explain that six people were injured and buildings were damaged by the impact. “We’ll risk our lives to fight until the Koon-Ni range is shut down,” said Choi Yong-woon, who lives in the Mae Hyang village.

U.S. and Korean military investigators deny the bombs caused injuries or property

Black parents appeal attack on N. Carolina school desegregation

BY LAUREN HART

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina—A significant fight over school desegregation continues to unfold here, nearly 30 years after court-ordered busing began to address racial inequalities in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district.

On June 7, a panel of judges from the 4th U.S. Circuit Court in Richmond, Virginia, heard arguments in the appeal by Black parents and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board of a September 1999 federal judge's order to end school desegregation efforts. More than 100 people turned out for the hearing, including 25 who took the five-hour ride overnight on a bus organized by the Charlotte NAACP.

"I think a lot of people thought this was only about busing. It's far from that," said Terry Belk, one of the Black parents challenging Judge Robert Potter's ruling, which bans consideration of race in school assignments. "We need to have the court [desegregation] order to stay in place so we can have some assurance of a quality education for all our kids."

The case is of national importance. In recent years school desegregation programs have been ended by court order in many cities, including Nashville, Tennessee; Wilmington, Delaware; Denver; and Cleveland. Last year the superintendent of the Boston public schools pointed to such rulings to justify dismantling the remnants of school desegregation efforts in that city.

Long fight against racist segregation

Schools throughout North Carolina were legally segregated—with grossly inferior conditions in the Black schools—from the defeat of Radical Reconstruction in the early 1880s until 1954. In that year, under the pressure of rising anticolonial movements around the world and the smoldering fight for Black rights in the United States, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, that supposedly "separate but equal" school systems were unconstitutional.

Officials in Charlotte and surrounding Mecklenburg County barely made token steps toward desegregation. Of 63 requests by Black students to transfer to all-white schools in 1957 and 1958, only seven were approved.

In 1965 Black residents Vera and Darius Swann sued the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, and four years later won a court order that the district be desegregated through mandatory busing. The Supreme Court upheld this decision in *Swann vs.*

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education in 1971, in a landmark ruling that gave a boost to the fight to desegregate schools throughout the country.

Between 1970 and 1992, desegregation was carried out through crosstown busing and "paired schools," with children from predominantly Black neighborhoods assigned to schools in white neighborhoods for half of elementary school, and white students attending schools that had been overwhelmingly Black for the other half. Nearly 40 percent of the more than 100,000 students in the school system today are Black.

Disparity grows in 1990s

Since the early 1990s, however, the schools here have become more segregated. In 1992 the school board dropped the system of paired schools, and instead launched a handful of "magnet schools" with special programs such as languages and advanced courses that students throughout the county can apply to. A lottery system that included race has kept the proportion of Black and white students steady in the magnet schools, but racial disparities have grown in dozens of regular schools throughout the district.

Today a quarter of the students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg attend "racially identifiable schools." And the conditions in these schools are far from equal.

"The school system didn't follow through," said Donald Reid, a member of the Steelworkers union who supports the fight for desegregation. "They said schools would be built where they would have a mixture of kids, and unfortunately that hasn't happened."

Over the last decades new schools with modern equipment have been built in the outer reaches of the Mecklenburg County suburbs, in defiance of court instructions to locate new schools where they will facilitate desegregation.

Meanwhile schools in the more working-class areas of central Charlotte, where many Black residents live, are crumbling. Accord-



Militant/Chris Davis

Norfolk, Virginia, May 1983: thousands march to defend desegregation efforts. U.S. rulers continue to chip away at school desegregation programs in many cities. Schools have become more segregated and racial disparities have grown.

ing to school officials, 19 of the 23 schools where students are predominantly Black are in need of serious renovation or replacement.

With the end of the paired schools, patterns of busing have changed as well. About 13,000 of the 16,000 students who are now bused a substantial distance are Black.

In 1997, Bill Capacchione sued the school system, charging that his daughter was denied entry into a magnet school because she is not Black. Six other white parents joined the suit, challenging the entire desegregation effort. Last September District Judge Potter issued a sweeping order barring the school district from using race as a criteria in school assignments. As a young attorney, Potter had filed a brief in the original *Swann* case opposing desegregation.

The plaintiffs from the *Swann* case, joined by other Black parents, appealed Potter's ruling. A majority of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board also decided to appeal, arguing that the school system had not fulfilled the earlier mandate to completely desegregate the schools.

At the same time, the board began debat-

ing a school assignment plan without desegregation measures for the 2001-02 school year, in the event Potter's ruling stands. After several months of wrangling, the board adopted a plan June 1, by a 6-3 vote, based on a combination of neighborhood "home schools," "choice zones" in which students can request a different school, and district-wide magnet schools. This assignment plan was opposed by three members of the board who have opposed the desegregation program. They objected to moving some of the more rigorous academic magnets from suburban schools closer to the inner city.

During the debate over the plan, mayors of towns in Mecklenburg County threatened to pull out of the unified school district.

Lawyers for the Black parents and the school board said they seemed to get a better hearing from the appeals panel than in Potter's courtroom. The appeals court is expected to take months to decide whether to uphold, overturn, or modify Potter's ruling. Any decision will almost certainly be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Lauren Hart is a textile worker.

Canada auto workers fight union busting

BY AL CAPPE
AND TONY DIFELICI

TORONTO—After nine weeks on strike, the 200 workers at the Toromont Caterpillar dealership plant just north of Toronto are holding strong and reaching out for solidarity. They have called a rally at the picket

line for June 17, to be followed by a barbecue.

The warehouse workers and mechanics, who repair the big earth moving machines and supply parts to outlets across the country, are members of Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) amalgamated Local 112. At the end of May, the company was able to force the workers to take part in the government-organized vote under antilabor legislation in the province. After rejecting the offer by a 65 percent majority, many workers on the picket line said the company underestimated their unity and resolve to see the strike through to the end.

In the week preceding the vote all the strikers received a company propaganda sheet, the *Toromont Newsletter*, by courier. The bosses tried to divide the strikers by claiming that "the strike is led by a small group of radicals within the membership.... These people are extremists who want to turn this into their own private war."

The heart of the Toromont bosses' strategy has been to divide the skilled from the unskilled workers. About three-quarters of the workers are skilled heavy equipment mechanics. The rest are warehouse and yard workers. In its newsletter the company appealed to the skilled workers, saying, "You are striking for a group of unskilled workers who are substantially overpaid and who are keeping you from doing your jobs.... Do these people really deserve your support?"

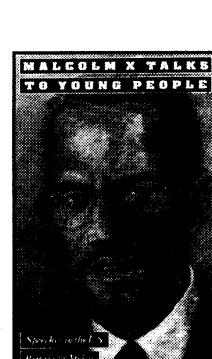
The divide and conquer tactics have not worked. "The key issues are imposition of a continuous workweek, a wage freeze for the unskilled workers, and the cutting of the cost-of-living clause for the unskilled workers," Tom McNally, the strike coordinator said. The skilled workers have been offered a small percentage wage increase over a five-year contract. The final offer of the company was worse than the initial offer.

The stakes are growing each day as it becomes clear that the goal of the company is to seriously weaken or break the union, which has organized the plant for three decades. The 1,700 workers at the nine other plants in Ontario are not unionized. The wages and benefits that workers have won at the struck plant in at least eight hard-fought strikes—the last one in 1994—have been applied to the nonunion plants to keep out the union. The CAW has appealed to the office and nonunionized workers in the Toromont chain to support the strike.

At the beginning of the April 10 walkout there was a massive police presence at the picket line. At the end of June the company started advertising in the mass circulation *Toronto Sun* for replacement workers at rates of pay well below the current pay scales, and opened up two new entrances to the property. But at this point they have not tried to bus in replacement workers. Strikers report that 20 workers have crossed the picket line. There is little production taking place since skilled mechanics are required for most of the work.

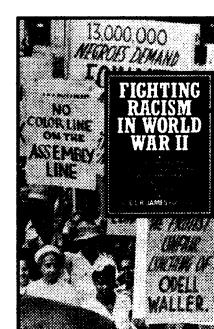
"Together we are committed to take on this employer and set an example to all employers who may share Toromont management's vision of a union-free workplace," said a strike bulletin issued by the union. "We cannot allow any employer to break any union anywhere. This strike is not about wages and benefits. It is about the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively with their employer and, with your support, we will do whatever it takes to defend these rights."

Al Cappe is a member of CAW Local 707 at the Ford assembly plant in Oakville. Tony Difelici is a meat packer and a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers at Quality Meats.



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Coal bosses break off talks with UMWA

Continued from front page

six years. The bonuses would range from \$200-\$500 a year, totaling \$1,800 by 2006. The union's package included a proposal for a 60-cent-an-hour wage increase each year for the life of the contract. "The company's offer would mean cutting workers' wages by \$15,000-\$20,000 a year," Oliver said.

Workers cannot collect a full pension until age 62, and only a partial pension at 55 no

matter how many years they have worked at the mine. The union wants a "20 and out" clause so that all miners with 20 years in the mine can draw a full pension if the P&M closes the mine. The company says it may close in 2006 when their contracts with power plants end.

P&M altered its demand that a new contract include urging workers who are Navajo to drop the company health plan in

exchange for \$100 a month and for the workers to use the Indian Health Service on the reservation. More than 90 percent of the mine workers are Navajo and workers considered the company demand discriminatory. Now P&M said it will offer the \$100 a month option to all employees. Union negotiators in their proposed package agreed to accept this concession.

"Production is already at the maximum.

The company has even bragged about the major increase in productivity in the last two years. And this is what they offer us!" Oliver said. Several other strikers made similar remarks on the picket line.

No union members have crossed the line at McKinley and strikers continue to receive solidarity. The New Mexico AFL-CIO has provided a cargo truck full of food and is bringing another one this week.

No negotiations have occurred or are scheduled with UMWA Local 1307 at the P&M mine in Kemmerer, Wyoming. In a June 13 article, the Casper, Wyoming, *Star Tribune* reports, "Union officials said the two sides were so far apart in their negotiations that the union membership never voted on a company offer prior to striking."

Both contracts are being negotiated by David Smith of Institutional Labor Advisors, a notorious antiunion lawyer who was hired by A.T. Massey in 1984 and Pittston Coal in 1989 when those companies tried to break the UMWA.

To send messages of solidarity and donations to Local 1332 write: UMWA Local 1332, PO Box 3750, Window Rock, AZ 86515. To contact the Kemmerer strikers write: UMWA Local 1307, P.O. Box 261, Diamondville, WY 83116.

Argentina: nat'l strike against austerity

Continued from front page

drivers from working. The cops arrested more than 50 people during the day, alleging similar activity.

"No to the austerity plan," chanted demonstrators in the capital of Buenos Aires. Jobless workers joined unionists in protests numbering in the hundreds, beating drums, throwing firecrackers, and in some cases blockading highways.

Two wings of the CGT officialdom, at odds with each other since a split in March of this year, united forces to call the strike. At that time, truckers union president Hugo Moyano led a breakaway from the CGT after the organization's officials backed off a threat to organize a general strike to counter legislation aimed at weakening union powers and workers' rights.

Government jolted by strike support

The government was clearly jolted by the support the strike received. President de la Rúa tried to violence-bait the strikers, saying that "in place of violence we need dialogue." The government offered to open talks on economic policy with representatives of unions, business, and the Catholic Church.

CGT president Rodolfo Daer called the strike a "plebiscite" in which the population had demanded a "change of course" by the government. Since his inauguration as president in December at the head of the "Alliance" coalition, de la Rúa has implemented a series of austerity measures that have squeezed workers' pay, undermined union rights, and cut funding to the impoverished provinces.

The unions called the general strike to protest a cut in public spending amounting to \$938 million—2 percent of the government budget—announced in the last week of May. The austerity program calls not only for slashing the salaries of public workers, but for a reduction in public retirement payments.

With these measures de la Rúa hopes to meet the guidelines imposed by the International Monetary Fund—an institution dominated by the imperialist powers, and especially Washington—as a condition of a \$7 billion-plus emergency credit line opened up after the government's initial austerity and antilabor measures.

The Argentine economy has been mired in recession for nearly two years, and shrank by 3 percent in 1999. Official unemployment stands at 14 percent, reaching 20 percent or more in the poorer provinces. The Argentine capitalists have fallen behind their neighbors and competitors in Latin America

in Brazil and Chile.

The general strike came on top of a number of labor and other actions, including, a smaller nationwide stoppage in May. Social rebellions, led by employed and unemployed workers, hit the province of Corrientes last December, and more recently Salta.

Reporting on the general strike with an unmistakable tone of concern, *New York Times* reporter Clifford Kraus wrote June 9 that "labor and social unrest is building in the countryside. Farmers who are seeking easier credit are threatening an extensive work action this month."

Farmers speak at forum on visit to Cuba

Continued from Page 8

and administrators whose policies were stifling the leadership, creativity, and involvement of the masses.

Effect of retreat

As Cuba was forced into the world market in the 1990s and suffered the effects of the capitalist economic crisis, especially as it hits the underdeveloped countries, the "workers and farmers engaged in a combination of necessary retreats and a campaign for political consciousness," she said. The retreats, including, the rapid expansion of tourism, the fact that most imported goods are available only for dollars, the introduction of more individual as opposed to collective incentives, and other measures. The result has been the removal of many obstacles to increasing production, but this has also led to a greater social differentiation in wages and income, and the development of a layer of parasitic middlemen.

These things undermine the social soli-

darity that is so strong in Cuba, and pose new challenges.

The congress discussed how to make sure government contracts for buying the farmers' produce are fair, and don't take the whole crop. They also discussed how to produce more, with more variety, and measures to lower prices paid by workers—in short how to strengthen the alliance between workers and farmers and deepen social solidarity.

All the speakers described the rallies and speakouts that continue against Washington's economic and political war against the Cuban revolution, focusing on the demand to return Elián González to Cuba, but also denouncing the U.S. government's embargo.

Randy Jasper commented that "the fight around Elián González seemed to have made the Cuban people into a stronger fighting group."

International delegations at the farmers' congress in Cuba included the indigenous

farmers organization that led the January mobilizations in Ecuador and a delegation from the Movement of Landless Rural Workers in Brazil.

The visits of the U.S. farmers have had an impact in Cuba, Towner said. When Cubans talk with the U.S. farmers who are fighting the same enemy they are fighting—the same capitalist families who own the banks and agribusiness companies that put farmers into a price-cost squeeze—they can see allies among working people in the United States.

Towner ended her remarks by pointing to the significance of the growing number of strikes and other resistance by workers in the United States and the fact that some farmers are beginning to link up with this. "A worker-farmer alliance is being forged here too," she said. "That shows what is possible."

The lively discussion that followed the three presentations dealt with all these questions and more.

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Sounds sensible—According to a United Kingdom poll, 63 percent of the public sees national health care as their most prized asset, de-



Harry
Ring

spite heavy-duty faults—a shoe-string budget, rationing of care and long waiting lists. Parliament won approval from 12 percent, the police, 11 percent. Trailing the list

with 3 percent was the royal family.

Israeli women can now wail all—“JERUSALEM”—In a groundbreaking decision, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that women may read aloud from the Torah at the Western [Wailing] Wall, Judaism’s holiest site.”—Associated Press.

The holy institution—Rome officials may reject a permit request for an international Gay Pride demonstration in July. The Vatican objected to issuing the permit, declaring it might “offend sensitivities” at a time when the city is packed with pilgrims for the Holy Year.

Maybe crime’s addictive?—Philip Morris, the world’s biggest peddler of coffin nails, has been taken into a U.S. federal court by 22 Colombian provinces and the capital city of Bogota. They accuse the company of cheating them out of tax revenues, big-time. They charge cigarette smuggling, cooperating with drug dealers, and money laundering.

P.S.—Lorillard and Brown & Williamson have jumped ship, conceding that maybe tobacco is a health hazard among the Merchants of Death. Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds are now left as the lone, hard-nosed holdouts on the issue.

Can you top this one?—In England, Malcolm Edge, a jobless architect, was convicted of working without pay while drawing unemployment benefits. Edge explained he had worked on an idea that might lead to a future job. The judge said he appreciated Edge’s attitude but that he would have fared better “sitting on his backside and watching television all day.” Edge was sentenced to 200 hours of community labor.

Neither have we—With apologies to any of our readers with a suit fetish, we found another interesting item in the article we cited earlier on the “frugal rich.” The fact is, the

authors report, most millionaires are relatively frugal. For instance, few have paid more than \$1,000 for a suit.

Surprise of the week—According to Associated Press, an increase in the inspection of processed meats has brought a rise in the recalls of contaminated products.

Patience can be a virtue—We’re gratified by the flow of clippings we’re receiving, and doing our best to work through the backlog. So, if you’re wondering about the great item(s) you sent, please bear with us—and continue sending clippings.

U.S. rulers seek to strengthen their nuclear edge

The excerpt below is taken from “Youth and the Communist Movement,” a talk given in June 1992 to a meeting of the Communist League and Young Socialists in the United Kingdom. The entire presentation appears in *Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. The excerpt can be found on pages 427-430. Copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

The United States ruling class is armed to the teeth and will not back off being the world’s top cop—with the world’s mightiest conventional and strategic nuclear arsenals.

allowing Washington the option to deploy a ground-based antiballistic missile system. The U.S. rulers intend to place themselves in a stronger position against all those powers that are continuing to build up their nuclear arsenals, and against all those that will acquire them in the coming decades. That is what the talks with Yeltsin are all about, not the destruction of nuclear weapons on the road to a more peaceful world.¹

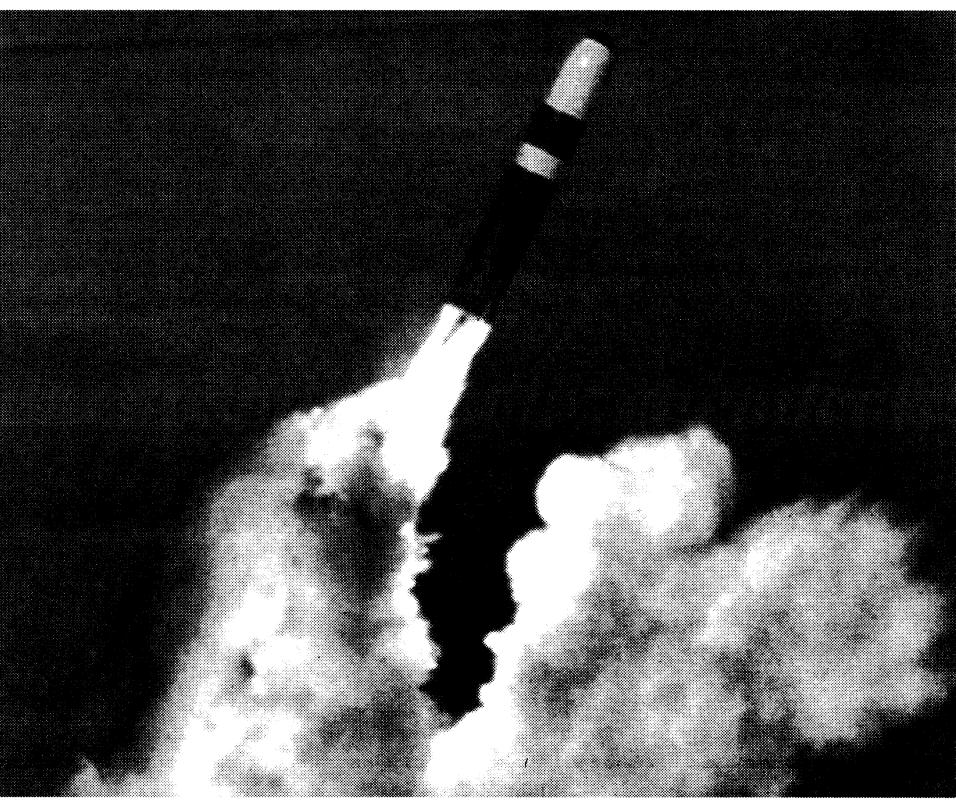
There will be more armed conflict and spreading wars in coming years. More governments in every part of the world will get their hands not only on nuclear weapons but also on ballistic missile delivery systems. At the same time, however, the working class and other toilers who have to fight and die on behalf of the interests of the exploiters will be a powerful source of resistance to such wars and preparations for war. We will have the opportunity to take power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers who are responsible for war, and for the nuclear threat that continues to hang over humanity.

During the war drive and bloody onslaught against Iraq, communist workers learned in practice how we can fight to defend space in the working class and labor movement to campaign against imperialism and war. We did so even during the stage when the capitalist rulers are always most successful in mounting patriotic backing for their war efforts—when U.S. forces go into combat, but before body bags begin returning home in unexpectedly large numbers. During the Gulf War, we saw just the beginnings of how antiwar resistance can develop among workers and youth. And we will see a similar process—similar debates, similar pressures, similar opportunities—as the capitalists mount more war drives and launch new wars.

¹ In January 1999 the Clinton administration announced plans to spend nearly \$7 billion over six years to build a long-range antiballistic missile (ABM) system, similar to the “Star Wars” program pressed by the Reagan White House in the 1980s.

Implementation of Clinton’s plan would mark a substantial escalation of strategic weaponry, placing Washington in a position to launch a nuclear first strike for the first time since the development by the Soviet Union of a hydrogen bomb and intercontinental missiles. Constructing the planned U.S. antiballistic missile system would abrogate the 1972 ABM agreement signed by Washington and Moscow, under which both governments are currently bound not to develop such a system.

While the U.S. government claims this move is designed solely as “defense” against “threats” from “rogue nations” such as North Korea and Iraq, its first strategic target is in reality the workers state in China—which has a substantially less developed nuclear arsenal and missile system than the workers state in Russia. Beijing immediately protested Washington’s announcement.



Trident II missile being launched from submarine. “U.S. rulers intend to place themselves in a stronger position against all those powers that are continuing to build up their nuclear arsenals, and against all those that will acquire them in coming decades.”

“It will have a comprehensive and far-reaching impact on the strategic balance and stability of the region and world at large in the 21st century,” said a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson. The statement warned of the added danger of joint development of an antimissile system between the U.S. and other countries, clearly referring above all to the often-mentioned potential U.S. partners near China’s borders, such as Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, as well as Russia.

Already confronted with Washington’s decision to expand NATO membership to several former Warsaw Pact countries close to Russia’s borders, Moscow has so far refused to ratify the START II treaty on nuclear warheads reduction, which was the topic of the 1992 talks between Bush and Yeltsin referred to above. Clinton’s ABM plans diminish still further the chances of any START II ratification, and bring the danger for Russia of a U.S. first-strike capacity that much closer.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—

25 CENTS
THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

June 27, 1975

The recent strike by melon pickers in Texas and the upswing in activity around the boycott of scab lettuce, grapes, and wines underline once again the inhuman exploitation farm workers are subjected to and the heavy odds they face in their uphill battle for social justice. Despite a decade-long struggle, the United Farm Workers holds only a few contracts in California and Florida, and has yet to win even one in Texas, scene of the latest strike.

The agribusinesses the UFW confronts are among the most powerful and greedy U.S. corporations. These mighty monopolies have at their service the cops, the courts, and the bureaucrats of the Teamsters union.

In order to defeat this vast conspiracy, *la causa* must become the cause of millions—Chicanos, students, trade unionists, and working people as a whole.

The enactment of the California farm labor bill sets the stage for renewed efforts to win UFW contracts covering farm workers in that state. The UFW is continuing its boycott of non-UFW lettuce, grapes, and wine. This boycott, which has already hurt the growers, can help force them to sign contracts with the union that represents the farm workers.

All those who support the UFW’s struggle

for decent working conditions and social justice should respond to the UFW’s appeals for stepped-up activity in support of the boycott.

THE MILITANT
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NEW YORK, N.Y.

FIVE (5) CENTS

June 26, 1950

“Loyalty” oaths are a trademark of police states. Every regime that fears its own subjects, that rules by fiat and force, demands repeated and ever louder assurances of “loyalty” from the people. To be silent and submissive is not enough. You must get down on your knees and servilely swear that not in deed nor even in thought will you ever oppose the regime or its policies.

Nothing better reveals the state of democracy and civil liberties in the United States today than the spread of the “loyalty” oath. Starting with employees of the federal government, the “loyalty” system is spreading into every sphere of American life—to teachers, lawyers, doctors, garbage collectors. Unions are denied government recognition unless their leaders take “loyalty” oaths; corporations are demanding contracts giving them power to fire workers who refuse to take “loyalty” oaths.

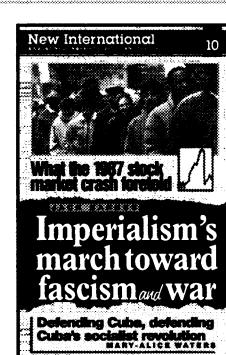
The spread of the “loyalty” oath attests how aware the capitalist rulers of America are of the feeble hold their system has on the true loyalty of the American people.

From Pathfinder

in New International no. 10

- Imperialism’s March toward Fascism and War by Jack Barnes
- What the 1987 Stock Market Crash Foretold
- Defending Cuba, Defending Cuba’s Socialist Revolution by Mary-Alice Waters
- The Curve of Capitalist Development by Leon Trotsky \$14.00

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Tel: (212) 741-0690. Fax: (212) 727-0150.



Imperialists hands off the Pacific!

Working people should oppose intervention in the affairs of Pacific island nations by the governments of Australia and New Zealand. As governmental crises erupt in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, the imperialist powers with the most direct stake in the South Pacific—Canberra and Wellington—are rushing to intervene to try to shore up their big-business interests. Their political interference is backed with the threat of military intervention (see news article on page 15).

In response to the rightist coup, military takeover, and hostage crisis in Fiji, Canberra and Wellington have threatened that country with trade sanctions and political isolation. By proclaiming their goal to be "restoration of democracy" in Fiji, the capitalist rulers in Australia and New Zealand don't mean returning the ousted Labour-led government and its limited reforms that benefited working people. They mean a stable regime that will protect their profiteering interests, including by suppressing democratic and union rights.

This imperial gunboat diplomacy follows the Australian-led military intervention in East Timor in late 1999 and the use of Australian and New Zealand "peacekeeping" troops since 1998 to try to defuse a movement on the island of Bougainville for independence from Papua New Guinea. Canberra and Wellington view with increasing alarm what they term "the arc of instability" in the region. This extends through the Indonesian archipelago from Aceh in the west through East Timor to West Papua, and on through Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, and the Solomons to Fiji in the east.

This social and political instability is not caused by

"ethnic tensions," although the legacy of divisions from the colonial era often do play a part. Rather this is the logic of the world capitalist system's disorder unfolding in one of the least developed parts of the semicolonial world. Two decades of economic crisis have shattered the stability of the most fragile capitalist regimes and destabilized imperialist domination and exploitation there.

Australian and New Zealand capitalism have profited mightily from these countries. For *them*, much is at stake. But for *us*—working people from Australia to Fiji, from New Zealand to the Solomons—our common interests lie in rejecting all imperialist interference in the region.

Working people should oppose the campaign for trade bans on Fiji by the union officialdom in Australia and New Zealand. As Australian Council of Trade Unions officials have made clear, their bans are tied to calls for more intervention by the Australian government. They echo the employers in repeating the chauvinist "white man's burden" argument that was used to justify colonialism. But the last thing the working people of Fiji need is intervention from governments that represent those who have plundered them.

The obligation of the labor movement in Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere is to give unstinting solidarity to our fellow toilers in these countries in their struggles for national sovereignty, labor, land, and national rights—without giving an inch to the imperial chauvinism of our exploiters at home. This also means joining in union and social struggles against our employers and their government—the common enemy of working people and the oppressed throughout the Pacific.

'Elián González must go home'

Continued from Page 9

States, such as those who carried out the successful sit-down strike two weeks ago at Dakota Premium Foods in south St. Paul, Minnesota, or rallied 20,000-strong in Los Angeles.

How far the rulers will get on this course, however, is not predetermined. It will be settled in struggle.

What role does the "Miami Mafia" play in all this?
The only accurate answer is less and less.

Some 800,000 Cubans and U.S. citizens of Cuban origin now live in Dade County, in south Florida. Every year that goes by, they are more and more differentiated by class, age, race, ties to family members living in revolutionary Cuba, years they themselves lived in Cuba after the triumph of the revolution, and attitudes toward the revolution.

The real bourgeois figures in the Cuban community in Miami, of whom there are a growing number, are more integrated than ever on a national level with their class brothers and sisters of non-Cuban origin in the two imperialist political parties and all their institutions. This could be seen in the role they played in the political battle around the Elián case—publishers, businessmen, religious figures, top-level academic administrators, and more.

At the same time, the majority of Cubans living in the United States have discovered that, for them, there is no pot of gold. Life may have some more material comforts than in Cuba, but with it come all the uncertainties, anxieties, racism, brutality, and alienation of human relations under capitalism.

Especially among the newer immigrants, the comparison with the life they left behind in Cuba—the social relations of a society in which working-class solidarity rules—is at best a very contradictory one. They are far from a counterrevolutionary "mafia." They are more and more like other immigrant workers.

The Socialist Workers Party for a quarter century has had an open public headquarters and bookstore in Miami, has carried out communist political work in the factories and on the streets there, and has presented candidates for public office. We know the realities of the class struggle in Miami well. And our public existence there has long put the lie to myths about the counterrevolution's dominance of all political life in the city.

One of the most telling things about the fight this year to defend the Cuban Revolution around the Elián González case is what it registers about the decline of armed Cuban counterrevolutionary organizations in Florida. They played virtually no role, in marked contrast to what would have been the case even a decade ago.

The turning point came with the decisive action taken by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba in 1996 when Cuban pilots brought down the Brothers to the Rescue provocateurs. The contrast between the crowd of 60,000 who filled the Orange Bowl stadium then and the pitiful showing of the aging right wing around the Elián González case speaks volumes about the real political evolution.

Following the INS raid at the end of April, members of the SWP and Young Socialists went door-to-door in a predominantly Cuban area of the city called Hialeah selling copies of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. Without incident. With much political discussion and numerous papers sold.

The reputed power of the counterrevolutionary forces in the Cuban community of Miami has always been largely derivative. So long as they served as foot soldiers for policies decided by the U.S. rulers, these forces could pretend to be calling the shots. That fiction was useful to all concerned. As soon as they got crosswise with Washington's course, however, as they eventually did around the Elián González case, their marginal role was impossible to camouflage.

In February of this year, at the same time that the battle around the Elián case was unfolding, truck drivers virtually shut down the port of Miami in protest over rising fuel costs and the squeeze being put on them by the big shipping companies.

In March, thousands of Florida residents and supporters from throughout the Southeast mobilized in the state capital against the racist anti-affirmative action policies of the state government headed by John Ellis Bush, brother of the Republican presidential candidate.

A delegation of small farmers, primarily from south Georgia and northern Florida, visited Cuba in February to learn for themselves firsthand the truth about the Cuban Revolution's land policies.

Tens of thousands, including many from Florida, rallied in Columbia, South Carolina, in January to demand that the Confederate battle flag flying over the state capitol building be removed. A few days later dockworkers in Charleston, South Carolina, many of whom had marched in Columbia, fought a pitched battle with strikebreaking cops trying to protect scab labor gangs on the waterfront.

Events such as these fill out the real picture of South Florida and the region it is part of. And they tell us even more about the class stakes surrounding the battle all of us have waged to return Elián to his homeland.

Solidarity with miners strikes

Members of the United Mine Workers of America on strike against Pittsburg and Midway Coal are standing on the front lines of labor's fight against the bosses' attacks on working conditions and our standard of living. P&M is demanding major concessions from the union at both its New Mexico and Wyoming mines. But much more is involved than contract fights. The coal bosses aim to deal a serious blow to the UMWA, and ultimately to drive the union out of the West.

Cuts in medical care, paltry pensions, lengthening of the workday and workweek—these are issues workers in the mills, garment shops, meatpacking plants, and other workplaces understand all too well. The stance and determination captured in one sign on the UMWA picket line in Kemmerer, Wyoming—"You take on one of us, you take on all of us"—is crucial for working people everywhere. Solidarity with the striking miners is needed from workers and their allies—farmers, students, and others—throughout the country.

There are high stakes for the labor movement in these fights. In Wyoming, the largest coal-producing state, Kemmerer is the only coal mine organized by the UMWA. The multibillion dollar coal companies have bent over backwards to keep coal production nonunion in the state.

At the McKinley mine, located on the Navajo reservation, the P&M bosses have taken a racist approach in demanding a contract in which workers can "voluntarily" give up the company-paid full medical coverage and instead use the health care provided on the reservation and receive \$100 per month in exchange.

Native Americans have fought for political and cultural

autonomy, respect of treaty rights, and restoration of lands stolen from them. When workers joined the UMWA at McKinley some 40 years ago, they won quality lifetime medical coverage. This gain strengthens the ability of Navajo Indians to fight against the second-class status they face under the capitalist system.

The company wants a free hand to move to 12-hour shifts and mandatory work on weekends without overtime premium pay. This issue goes to the heart of the attacks on job conditions and safety that workers face in every industry as the bosses drive to increase their profits in the face of stiffening competition.

These strikes overlap with a developing social movement in coal communities across the country. They follow the 8,000-strong rally in Washington, D.C., in defense of cradle-to-grave health-care benefits for coal miners and their dependents.

A UMWA victory in the West will add momentum to the union's efforts to defend lifetime health care, and bolster efforts to organize nonunion miners.

The P&M strikers are far from alone in their fight for dignity. Actions by meatpacking workers at Dakota Premium Foods for union recognition and the Machinists strike against Maytag in Illinois are just two of the most recent struggles that can strengthen the confidence and resolve of mine workers.

Unionists, farmers fighting to keep their land, and youth involved in social struggles need to get the word out about the miners' battle. Send messages of solidarity, stop by the picket lines, help initiate plant-gate collections, and do what is possible to strengthen our side. Solidarity!

Big opportunities to sell 'Militant'

Opportunities to get the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* around are bigger than they have been for some time. By getting out the truth about battles such as those by Minnesota meat packers and Western coal miners, these papers objectively strengthen labor and farm struggles, helping wider numbers of working people build on each other's experiences and emulate these examples.

We urge *Militant* supporters to join in the tremendous increase in the number of papers and subscriptions sold over the past weeks. Militant workers and socialists across the United States redoubled their efforts this week to get out news of the sit-down strike and union representation fight at Dakota Premium Foods in Minnesota, and in several cases had to order more papers. They weighed in on the side of the workers' battle and found a real interest among many who want to follow the example set by the meat packers in St. Paul.

News and analysis on the Cuban revolution, the class struggle in the Middle East, and worker and peasant struggles in Latin America and elsewhere bring a broader world perspective for every new reader of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* to consider.

One of the greatest illusions the bosses and their government foster is that they are all-powerful and the work-

ing class and its allies are not. Today's events help expose that untruth. Joining the effort to distribute the paper on the job, to fellow unionists and fighters, to farmers fighting to keep their land, or to youth protesting the effects of the capitalist social and economic crisis can further this process. Order a bundle today—big or small—by calling the *Militant* at (212) 243-6392.

Correction

An error appeared in the article "Visitors to Tehran book fair hungry for lessons of struggle" in the June 12 issue. The paragraph describing sales of Farsi-language translations of Pathfinder books should have read: "Seven Pathfinder books that have been translated into Farsi, the official language in Iran, were on sale in the Farsi-language section of the fair. Three hundred copies of Farsi-language translations of Pathfinder titles were purchased in all, 92 of them copies of *Socialism and Man in Cuba* by Ernesto Che Guevara."

Protests in Fiji against coup, military gov't

BY MICHAEL TUCKER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Sugar cane farmers in Fiji have refused to harvest the cane crop in wake of the May 19 rightist coup and subsequent military takeover. The coup leaders ousted the Labour Party-led government of Mahendra Chaudhry.

Many other working people have been staying off work. The Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC) and the Fiji Labour Party are calling for the Labour government to be restored to office.

Rightist gunmen, led by businessman George Speight, occupied the parliament May 19 taking hostage 34 members of the government. As the takeover entered its fourth week, 31 were still being held. Speight has repeatedly threatened to kill the hostages if there is an attempt to free them by force.

Fiji's military proclaimed martial law May 29 and assented to the rightists' demands. The government and president were dismissed, a new constitution was promised that would exclude Fijians of Indian descent from high office, and the rightists were guaranteed amnesty from prosecution on release of the hostages. However, negotiations stalled after the military rejected the demand for a new government under their control.

The head of the military, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, said that the inclusion of Speight, or others who carried out the coup attempt, in a new government would result in trade sanctions by the European Union, leading to the cancellation of orders for Fiji's sugar harvest. Sugar is Fiji's main export. Most of it is purchased in Europe at prices four times above those on the open market.

Harvesting of Fiji's 4.5 million tons of sugar cane was due to start in late May. But cane farmers refused to begin cutting the cane in order to press for the hostages' release. The boycott is backed by the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Fiji Cane Growers Association, the two main organizations representing the country's 23,000 cane farmers.

The boycott has been solid in the cane fields of the west and north. "I salute the farmers who have decided to protest," declared FTUC general secretary Felix Anthony June 7. Already, sugar shipments to Malaysia, Korea, and Portugal have been deferred. The Fiji Sugar Corporation announced June 7 that workers at the country's four sugar mills would be laid off. That same day the military threatened the cane farmers, saying that it would order them under martial law to carry out the harvest or face prosecution.

The FTUC has held off calling any further official protest actions since a 24-hour strike May 22 that shut down the country. Instead, it has focused on promoting overseas union bans and trade sanctions.

Many workers have stayed away from work since the May 19 coup. Others have been laid off or are working short hours as economic activity slows.

Impact on garment industry

The biggest impact has been in the garment industry, which employs more than 20,000 people, most of them women. After sugar, garment is Fiji's second major industry. Each accounts for around 30 percent of the country's export revenue.

Garment bosses have pointed to the failure of workers to report to work since the coup as the reason for a production slump, leaving them unable to supply overseas buyers and leading to the loss of new orders. Others have blamed cargo bans imposed by unions in Australia as leaving them unable to import fabric or export finished goods.

Fiji's garment industry mushroomed following the two 1987 military coups led by Sitiveni Rabuka. His regime offered 13-year tax breaks to garment firms to set up in Fiji. Many of the garment plants are large, often employing hundreds, and some well over 1,000 workers. Both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, as well as a layer of Asian workers, work in the plants. Most are nonunionized, with average earnings around Fiji\$80 per week (Fiji\$1=US 46 cents).

Layoffs and shorter hours

Hundreds of workers are also working short hours or being laid off from hotels and service industries as the number of tourists arriving in Fiji plummets.

Other industries, from gold mining to village crafts, report jobs being lost or threatened. Schools throughout Fiji have remained



Militant/Doug Cooper
Fijians and supporters march May 31 in Canberra, Australia. May 19 overthrow of Labour Party-led government targets workers and farmers of all nationalities.

closed since the May 19 coup.

Meanwhile, hundreds have been queuing to apply for passports, causing the Immigration Department to run out of blank passport books.

Gangs of Speight supporters based in the parliament compound have made regular forays into the capital, Suva, and surrounding areas carrying out violence, looting, and

arson.

The military has imposed a nighttime curfew and has banned protest marches and meetings. Despite this, vigils, rallies, and other forms of protest to demand the release of the hostages have been occurring.

Speight and his supporters claim to be acting as the champions of "indigenous rights" for native Fijians, while targeting

Fijians of Indian descent with racist vitriol. The rightists justify their attempted coup by labeling the Labour government as "Indian dominated." Leaders of political parties representing Fiji's hereditary ruling chiefs have expressed support for Speight's goals while criticizing his "methods," as have the leaders of the military, which is almost exclusively composed of indigenous Fijians.

Divisions imposed by colonialism

The institutions of political rule in Fiji were developed under British colonialism and maintained at independence in 1970. These enshrine social domination by the chiefly aristocracy in collaboration with local and foreign capitalists. The demand for "indigenous rights" has become a rallying cry of these ruling layers as they press to preserve this reactionary setup in the face of growing strains. It also finds support, however, among some working people who are indigenous Fijian, who are among the most impoverished layers of the toilers.

As the impasse between the military rulers and the rightists has continued, there have been new signs of the pressures coming to bear on the chiefly order. A meeting of chiefs in the west of Fiji in early June voted to constitute their own confederation of chiefs and called for a separate government to rule Fiji's western provinces. The west is the heart of the sugar cane and tourist industries, and is the most integrated region of the country. Chiefs in the north said they too were discussing the formation of a separate government.

Canberra, Wellington intervene in Solomons

BY DOUG COOPER

SYDNEY, Australia—Long-simmering unrest in the Solomon Islands boiled over June 5 when Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu and others were put under house arrest for two days by members of the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), who also occupied key installations throughout Honiara, the country's main town and capital.

As the *Militant* goes to press, the MEF still controls the capital while its more lightly armed opponent, the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), reportedly has the town surrounded.

The Australian and New Zealand governments moved rapidly to assert their right to decide what happens in the South Pacific, the region they arrogantly consider to be their "backyard."

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) amphibious landing ship HMAS *Manoora*, with more than 200 troops and three Black Hawk attack helicopters on board, arrived off Honiara June 12. Australian SAS commandos were reported June 10 to already be on Guadalcanal, the island where the capital is located, to conduct "reconnaissance."

Meanwhile, the transport ship HMAS *Tobruk* arrived June 8 in Honiara under the pretext of evacuating Australian, New Zealand, and other nationals. The *Tobruk* left June 10 with 480 evacuees after standing by until the New Zealand warship HMNZS *Te Mana* arrived. Others were put on two Royal New Zealand Air Force planes on June 11. More flights have followed.

While neither side in the armed conflict has made threats against foreign nationals, their presence provides an ongoing pretext for imperialist intervention, either in the form of evacuation or protection for "helpless civilians." Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer, who was in Honiara June 10–11 with his New Zealand and Botswanan counterparts and a top Malaysian official to demand a cease-fire under the rubric of the Commonwealth, ruled out immediate Australian "peacekeeping" intervention. However, an unnamed RAN spokesperson noted June 12 that the presence of the warship *Manoora* "provides options for the government."

The conflict between the MEF and the IFM is widely described in the big-business media as an "ethnic" conflict between "immigrants" from Malaita island and "indigenous" people on Guadalcanal. But there are no "ethnic" differences between people from Malaita and Guadalcanal as such. Family, clan, and tribal social relations still predominate among the 400,000 people throughout the seven large and numerous smaller islands and outlying atolls. While

English and Pijin are widely used, more than 60 local languages are still spoken.

The Solomon Islands is a former British colony that won independence only in 1978. The country faces imperialist oppression and exploitation, especially through gold mining and logging, but modern classes are only now just coming into being and a national consciousness is still awakening.

Migration for jobs

People from Malaita island have, over the years, come in large numbers to Guadalcanal in search of land or jobs. As well, much of the civil service and police force are comprised of those from Malaita and many local shops and businesses are owned by people originally from Malaita. Unemployment is high.

MEF leader Andrew Nori, one of the first Solomon Islanders to become a lawyer, is a longtime politician and opponent of Prime Minister Ulufa'alu, who is himself from central Malaita.

The IFM has pushed the politics of resentment against those from Malaita who have settled on Guadalcanal and calls for their expulsion. Over the last 18 months what is now called the IFM has waged a terror campaign centered in the villages, with some 60 killed and 20,000 people displaced to Honiara. Nori and the MEF took action in the face of what they call the government's inability to maintain law and

order.

On June 5, IFM fighters attacked the Gold Ridge gold mine. The two-year-old Australian-owned mine now provides more than 50 percent of the country's GDP. Its workforce includes people from both Malaita and Guadalcanal along with foreign nationals.

Ulufa'alu declared a draconian state of emergency in mid-1999, severely restricting all democratic rights and vastly strengthening police powers. Unlike Fiji, the Solomon Islands has no standing army. Under the impact of the ongoing tensions, the police force has largely disintegrated, with many defecting to the MEF in recent weeks and providing it with access to automatic rifles and other weaponry. Unconfirmed reports say that hundreds may have been killed in initial fighting, which lasted two days.

Representatives from all sides have called for armed "peacekeeping" intervention, but some say they oppose unilateral intervention by Australia.

In the wake of recent events in Indonesia, East Timor, Fiji, and the Solomons, Canberra and Wellington—the imperialist powers with the most direct stake—are deeply worried by what pundits are now calling the "arc of instability" in the Pacific.

Doug Cooper is a member of the Maritime Union of Australia.

LETTERS

Jock Barnes, union fighter

I'm writing to let readers of the *Militant* know of the death of Jock Barnes in Auckland, New Zealand, at the age of 92. Barnes, whose portrait appeared on the Pathfinder mural (in the section that is used on the front cover of Pathfinder's edition of the *Communist Manifesto*), was national president of the watersiders (longshoremen) union during the 1951 waterfront lockout, the biggest industrial battle in New Zealand's history.

For 151 days, 8,000 watersiders stood firm against an all-out attack from the government and the employers aimed at crushing their union. More than 10,000 other workers, particularly coal miners, meat workers and seafarers, struck in their support. In the years following, there was no prouder boast among class-conscious workers than "I was a fifty-oner."

During Barnes's leadership, the watersiders union was at the forefront of the upsurge of the union movement after World War II, setting an example of militancy, union democracy, and internationalism. For

instance, the union-led opposition to New Zealand participation in the imperialist wars against Korea and Malaya, in the latter case under the slogan "Not a son or a gun for Malaya."

In a 1981 interview, Barnes said the main lesson that workers could draw from the 1951 experience was that "faced with a situation like we were—an all-out offensive by the capitalist class—there is only one answer: fight and make it cost them every penny you can possibly make them pay.... When they really put the pressure on, you have two choices—you can stand up and fight or you can lie down and grovel. It's as simple as that."

Terry Coggan
Auckland, New Zealand

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Lebanese, Palestinians celebrate Israeli retreat

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN

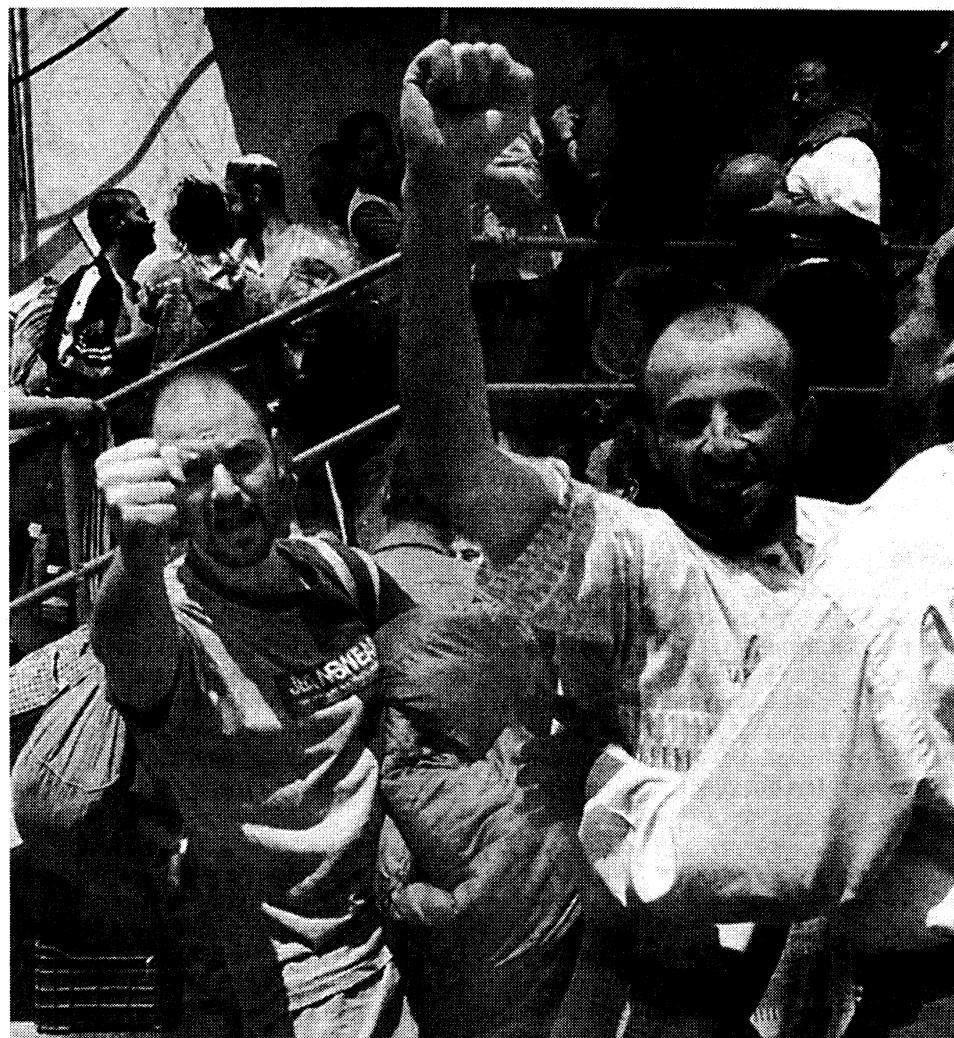
BEIRUT, Lebanon—Tens of thousands of people turned out in this capital city June 5 to celebrate the liberation of south Lebanon from Israeli occupation forces. In May, the Israeli government withdrew its troops from a nine-mile-wide swath of the country, hoping to turn the area over to its puppet South Lebanon Army (SLA). The rightist militia collapsed within hours of Israel's military pullback.

The massive turnout welcomed fighters who were part of an armed resistance to the occupation, organized by Hezbollah. As they rode in a convoy of tanks, armored personnel carriers, and trucks captured from the fleeing SLA, the fighters were cheered by throngs of people. They were joined by thousands of cars and motorcycles in their journey through the city. The convoy made its way through working-class neighborhoods, where people lined up along the streets and overpasses. The victory parade coincided with the anniversary of the brutal 1982 invasion of Lebanon, in which Israeli forces drove all the way to Beirut in face of a heroic three-month resistance by Palestinian and Lebanese fighters.

The rout of the pro-Israeli forces occurred over a two-day period in late May. With initial signs of the Israeli withdrawal, thousands of Lebanese and Palestinian workers and farmers descended on the SLA positions. Daily convoys to the south from all parts of the country have continued since. Many of these end up in the border village of Kfar Kila, located a few hundred yards from the Israeli settlement of Metula. Thousands of people have demonstrated there on an almost daily basis against the continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands.



On June 4 this reporter witnessed the scene in Kfar Kila. Some 10,000 people were demonstrating at a barbed wire fence erected by the Israeli government. At the main watch tower, youth gathered to throw rocks over the fence onto barricaded Israeli troops. Young people would sing in English the rock song "We will, we will rock you," and then the stones would fly. The demon-



Freed inmates at Israeli-controlled Khiam prison, southern Lebanon, among 144 released after crowd of local residents stormed the prison.

in the hope of finding him. For us, the liberation of south Lebanon is a big deal, it means the chance of seeing our families. But more than that, as you can see something historic is happening here—contact with Palestinians who stayed behind."

Some of the bewildered Israeli soldiers were convinced to carry letters, parcels, cell phones, money, and other gifts across the three-meter gap between the separated groups of Palestinians.

Response of Israeli soldiers

One soldier, who refused to be identified, talked briefly to this reporter. "This is bad," he said, touching the fence. "It must come down." Another, a Jew originally from Egypt, said in another conversation, "This is no good. Families should be reunited. Maybe with peace that can happen." Asked if he supported the right of the Palestinians pressed against the fence to return to their homes, he thought for a while and responded, "I don't see why not, I have no objection."

Khaled, a resident of the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, had gone to the fence for two straight days. Later, in Beirut, he said going to the fence "changed everything. Seeing our Palestinian brothers and sisters from the other side, touching them, talking with them, dancing with them was a big change. We cut the fence with the wire cutters we had brought. We actually stepped into Palestine, touched it and tasted its soil. The return to our homeland used to be a theoretical dream, now we can taste it! Why not? We already cut the wire once and stepped in."

After five days the Israeli army declared the entire zone a closed military area. This reporter witnessed through the fence using a zoom lens Israelis manning road blocks and turning away cars, preventing Palestinians living in Israel from reaching the zone. Both sides of the border were hit with tear gas and percussion bombs. Twelve were arrested in Israel.



In Bint Jbeil, one of the main towns in the southern formerly occupied zone, lies a substantial installation surrounded by blue and white fences, which are the colors of the Israeli flag. Three Hezbollah members stand guard at the facility. "This used to be the regional headquarters of the Israeli oc-

cupiers," said one of the resistance fighters who did not wish to give his name. "They literally retreated in a very big hurry. They did not expect to." Across the entrance still stands an abandoned tank of the SLA. "As you can see we are now controlling the base." Inside the base, resistance fighters were still clearing mines and other dangerous explosives. Vast parts of land in the south are now cordoned off by the resistance fighters due to mines laid by the Israelis.

Similar scenes could be seen throughout the area. Base after base was under the control of Hezbollah forces, and there was little or no visible presence of the Lebanese government troops.

There is discipline and organization by working people across the area. Most liberated villages are guarded by the resistance forces. Christian villages in particular have extra guards to ensure no retaliatory acts against collaborators are carried out. Most SLA commanders were Christian.



Tobacco farms make up large parts of the south of Lebanon. The village of Aaita Ech Chaab is surrounded by hills with tobacco as the main crop. One farmer, who was known as "the Hajje," said, "Liberation is a great joy. Seeing you all come from Beirut is a great joy. This is something that was impossible for 22 years." She added, "From our small village 35 people were taken to the SLA-run Khiam prison camp for their resistance actions."

Across her front door stood an abandoned SLA armored personnel carrier with several children playing on it. "Liberation for me," said one, "was seeing my parents. My dad was in Khiam for two years and my mom for one year. On liberation night they knocked on the door!"

"I want you to know that Christian villagers protected us from the SLA killers. It was not a Muslim/Christian thing at all. It is important that you tell people that. In fact, 70 percent of the collaborators are Muslims," explained the Hajje.

"We hope that liberation will improve our living conditions," continued the Hajje. "Last year our family produced 400 kg of tobacco. We sold the tobacco to the Lebanese government company as always. This brought us 4 million LL [US\$2,700]. You cannot live on that. At the same time, we were forced to buy more expensive Israeli

goods. For example, Israeli tomatoes were 6,000 LL/Kg [US\$4]. Now we can get Lebanese tomatoes for 2,000 LL."

"All this meant that many villagers were forced to go work in Israeli farms and factories near the border," said the Hajje. "I want you to understand that these people were not collaborators, they had no choice but to work there. From our village, 15 went daily there. Now this process has stopped. The problem of production of tobacco, of prices, remain. God willing, with liberation, all these things will get better."



Khiam prison camp has become a symbol and center of daily mass protest at the crimes of the Israeli occupiers and their puppet SLA militia. This reporter witnessed thousands of working people, Lebanese and Palestinian, Muslim and Christian, visit the camp. Trade unions, schools, student groups, political parties, and individual people make the trek to the camp each day. At the jailhouse, prisoners who were recently liberated act as tour guides.

They showed the torture chambers, where for days on end prisoners were subjected to electric shocks, the hooks in the courtyard where prisoners were hung, and solitary confinement rooms two square meters with no toilet or window. One woman from a nearby village, who identified herself as Souad, said, "These collaborators are not human beings. They have no room in our communities. The government better keep them away."

The Lebanese government has 1,700 collaborators in custody. Their trials have already begun in military courts. Some 7,000 more fled to Israel. On June 5, the courts issued 84 sentences, ranging from six months to five years in jail. The *Daily Star* reports that some suspects had been previously released and were found in the liberated zones and subsequently beaten by residents.

Hezbollah official Mohammed Raad denounced the sentences as too lenient. "If we don't penalize the criminal, we will be legalizing the ideology of treason," he said. "Clemency for these people will spark a civil and social crisis in many of the liberated villages, which suffered much at the hands of these collaborators."

Israeli public security minister Shlomo Ben-Ami welcomed the sentences and hoped for the rapid return of SLA members. Patriarch of the Lebanese Maronite Church, Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, called for the early return to Lebanon of those that fled to Israel.



Imperialism urges troop deployments

Fearing the impact of the liberation of south Lebanon on the entire country and the rest of the region, the French and U.S. governments have been pushing for the deployment of troops in the liberated areas. The French foreign ministry, in an arrogant imperial message, urged the Lebanese government to "assume its effective authority in the south. This implies the deployment of units of the army."

Paris has assembled a fleet in Toulon for dispatch to Lebanon as part of a planned deployment of UN troops. There are already 4,500 UN troops just outside the liberated areas and the UN is preparing an overall force of 8,000 to be sent in, including a strong French contingent.

U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright said in a statement that Washington hopes "very much that the Lebanese Army would begin to move into southern Lebanon and that the Lebanese would take control over their own territory."

Reflecting the fears of broad layers of the Lebanese capitalist class, Cardinal Sfeir echoed Albright's wishes. "We demand the immediate deployment of the army," he said. Coupling his demand with a supposed threat to Christians in the south, the cardinal called "on all Christians to solidarize with the populations in south Lebanon who fear for their future due to the situation created over the last days."